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# **MIMICRY and WORLD RENOWNED**

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VENUMADHAV

**I.V. CHALAPATI RAO**

**Vamsi Krishna Publications**

11-25-45, Vasavi Colony, Warangal - 506002.

# **MIMICRY AND WORLD RENOWNED VENUMADHAV**

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**Prof. I.V. CHALAPATI RAO**

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## **PUBLISHERS' NOTE**

The topic "**Mimicry and World Renowned Venumadhav**" has greatly appealed to us as there is not a single book on the subject and not a single source book is available for reference.

Indeed, it has been a great pleasure to undertake publication of this unique piece of writing which by all means, would remain a monumental work for all time. And to identify ourselves with the happy wedlock of the creative intellect of the author and the skills of the world renowned artiste is certainly a matter of fortune and pride.

Henceforth it will be our endeavour to bring out more and more books on specialised areas like this in order to project the hidden treasures of artistic and literary talent in our country. Some may not be commercially viable but if these works can satisfy even a single hungry reader on the subject our aim is amply fulfilled.

The love, affection and admiration for Dr. Nerella Venumadhav, and his art, have motivated, Sri G.P. Rao IAS, Sri Akarapu Raja Chenna Visweswar Rao, Warangal, Smt. Jhansi Rani Namburi, Hyderabad to voluntarily come forward to whole heartedly help us in bringing out this publication. We are grateful to them. We also thank Prof. B.V. Pattabhiram and Prof. V. Viswanadham, for their help. We also thank Sri G. Hari Hara Reddy of Esses Laser Graphics, for the neat and beautiful printing work.

We tender our grateful thanks to Pro. I.V. Chalapati Rao and Sri Venumadhav for the encouragement given to us.



## A WORD

In this book, the first of its kind in English, the author has made an in depth study of mono acting and mimicry and its relation to the conventional stage acting. He has identified the true elements of art which should be carefully studied by all interested in it. With a superb and masterly analysis, he made a synoptic survey of the subject in a style that is at once powerful and pleasing. A graphic account of the artiste's contribution has been added to inspire emulation. I am sure young artistes will develop their skills through hard work and discipline. All things considered, the book shows originality of thinking and independence of outlook. The author's style has the two chief characteristics - LIGHT and HEAT.

R. V. SATHYANARAYANA RAO  
Bhasha Kuteeram, Hyderabad.







## THE AUTHOR

**Prof. I.V. CHALAPATI RAO** Editor of TRIVENI, a 72 year old Cultural quarterly, has contributed widely in journals and magazines and has written many books besides editing numerous other works including the Souvenirs of the World Telugu Conference and the National Seminar on Education. He is an educator, who has taught at many colleges, a seasoned Principal, and an able administrator.

He served as Professor and Head of the Collegiate Cell in the State Council of Educational Research & Training, also as Deputy Director of Higher Education, Government of Andhra Pradesh, and Registrar of the C.I.E.F.L.

More recently, he has divided his time between writing and cultural activities besides speaking assignments in Colleges and Universities.

**DEDICATED  
to  
MY PARENTS**



- My Father Sri NERELLA SRIHARI** - A Scholar, Linguist, Poet, Critic, Mimic, and Philanthropist.
- My Mother Smt. N. SRILAKSHMI** - A Devotional Singer

**Whose infinite LOVE has shaped my mind, body and soul and to whom I owe everything.**

**- Venumadhav**

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The Artiste

## **INTRODUCTION**

*I*t is interesting to contemplate at this distance of time the genesis of the project of writing a book on Mimicry and Venumadhav's pioneering role in shaping and popularising the difficult art. Although I witnessed several performances of other artists and those of Venumadhav himself, his special and inspired performance given at Kakinada during 1969-70 when I was Principal of Pithapur Rajah's Govt. College made such an impact on me that I resolved to write a book on the art and the artiste. I was particularly fascinated by the idea that he had distinguished himself through proficiency in an art about which there were no books at all in the field. Although this art and the conventional stage acting bear some resemblance to each other, they are different. The grand combination of mimicry, mono-acting, and ventriloquism (mixed by Venumadhav in a happy blend) makes it superior to stage acting. Although they are similar they are not identical. There is a distinction without difference.

Naturally there was some excitement not unmixed with joy in writing on something which was not attempted before. There was a sense of adventure when it was realised that the subject was an area of comparative freshness-virgin soil. Nevertheless there was also an accompanying feeling of insecurity in being handicapped for want of standard and reliable material on which one could draw. These arts flourished in ancient India but they did not possess a separate identity as they were indistinguishable from "street drama" and other miscellany of public entertainments.

I chose Venumadhav, the artiste, as a fit subject for semi biographical treatment since he is undoubtedly the greatest exponent of this art in our country and a pioneer who did relentless research in evolving and creating new styles in

performance. As an admiring friend, I wanted to pay my tribute to his art by writing a small book. The more I think of the high esteem in which art and artistes were held in those halcyon days of the past and the royal patronage extended to them, the more I wonder how a common man like me could record my reaction in the pages of a book. Alexander, the man of taste, chose that the elegant and expensive Persian casket which was brought to him by his soldiers from among the spoils of King Darius, should be used as a receptacle for Homer's 'ILIAD' but not for any lesser jewel.

Bhoja, the legendary king, gave a lakh of rupees to each letter or line produced by the poets. Napoleon Bonaparte insisted that a certain master-piece of painting formed necessary stipulation in the clauses of a treaty. I am disinclined to believe that Leonardo de Vinc i did not die in the arms of King Francis. Krishnadevaraya was reported to have got off his caparisoned elephant to extend his hand to Alasani Peddana, the great Telugu poet, each time he met him on the road. Emperor Shah-Jehan, who was about to die, insisted that he should have his last look at the Tajmahal. Akbar extended to Tansen, the immortal singer, courtesies which no sovereign ever extended to a subject. Charles V sat on his knees to pick up the brush that fell from Titian's hands. When his nobles whispered among themselves in protest, he reprimanded saying "I can create hundreds like you. Can I create another Titian?" "Socrates considered artistes as " the only wise men".

The reader will find that the plan of the book is like this; half of it is devoted to art and the other half deals with the artiste. The semi-biographical element largely consists of the artiste's contribution to art, his varied talents and achievements, his international renown and such aspects of his personal life as have a bearing upon his art. Thoughtful planning is essential for any enduring achievement. The artiste came to greatness little by little but only when he used the little with all the greatness he had. He has a Falstaffian humour and genial bonhomie which

brought him closer to the hearts of his audience. Humour is the salve of sorrow. Let us rub it into our wounds. Without the anti-septic protection of a little irony, we become infected with the pus of self-pity or the virus of self-righteousness. Humour is not the make-shift quality for leisure hours but has substantial value in our moral development.

I thank Sri Ravuri Satyanarayana Rao of Bhasha Kuteeram for his kind comments in the preface. Finally, the project would have been a non-starter but for the innumerable interviews I had with Venumadhav who put more life into years than years into life. I am sure the discerning public will accept this little book as a new venture.

**I.V. CHALAPATI RAO**

## MIMICRY - THE ART

India, which was for a long time a centre of civilisation and culture when trade and commerce flourished, was also the home of fine arts. In ancient India, popular arts included music, dance, drama, painting, sculpture and architecture. In all of them pioneering contribution was made by the artistes. The distinctive feature of our art is that the exponents and practitioners were motivated by religious zeal and that they entertained a firm belief that art in its noblest form should be directed towards worship of God. Mimicry may be regarded as a category of drama, related to acting, representing its most significant and difficult aspects.

Art is primarily an activity aiming at the production of the beautiful. Its triple goals are Satyam (the truth), Sivam (the good), and Sundaram (the beautiful). Whatever its form, Art is the culture of the feelings-not the cultivation of the feelings, not their rank growth nor yet their forced bloom but their education - their growth to fullness and perfection, to harmonious life and rhythm. Thus it is concerned with the supremacy of spiritual values as distinct from the passing shows and shams of life. Art in its sublime form transcends the body, which is the "sinstrument of life" (a phrase coined by Sal Bellow in 'Herzog') and passes through the cultural values of the mind to reach the soul's inner depths. Like the quality of mercy, it blesses the one that gives (artiste) and the one that receives (spectator).

The three-fold media of art are the theatre, the spectator and the actor. Unless one is a superb actor, one cannot aspire to become a successful mimicry artiste. According to the belief of our ancestors, the whole world is a stage and the creator himself is Jagannataka Sutradhari (one who directs this world of drama). According to our Shastras and the Puranas, entire creation is a leela" or play of Brahma. The true object of Indian art is to establish rapport between the Creator and the Creation.



The characteristic genius of the ancient Indian art has been to pursue the eternal values of life and to reach the core of existence and to interpret the realism to the world. Bharata calls an actor a scholar and a genius who endeavours to lead the audience to a profound realisation of the ultimate goal of life. The same idea is echoed by Shakespeare when he said "All the world is a stage and all the men and women are players". He makes Jaques in 'As You Like It' compare the seven "ages" of man to a Seven-Act drama unfolding the successive scenes from infancy to old age.

Bharata said "Loka Vrittyanukaranam Natyam". Drama is imitation of life. Dryden calls it "a just and lively representation of life". Imitation need not be a mere carbon copy. It can be a visionary projection in the Aristotelian sense. It need not be a candid camera-shot. Infact, even a photographer has to catch that supreme moment which reveals the complete man. Referring to that special sense which all artistes should cultivate, world-famous photographer Karsh has said : "It registers in a fraction of a second the inward power of greatness. There is a brief moment when all that is in a man's mind and soul or spirit is reflected through his eyes, his hands and his attitude : this is the moment to record."

If so much is expected in a mechanical art like photography, we can imagine the immense possibilities of drama/acting. The artiste with his vision and insight should be able "to see the world in a grain of sand, heaven in a wild flower, and to hold infinity in the palm of the hand and eternity in an hour."

The artiste-actor displays a talent for enjoying the unreal fancying it to be real. He also possesses the capacity to react in sorrow, anguish, pain and suffering without actually suffering or experiencing sorrow and agony. This requires great imagination. He proves that the real self can pass through a world of emotions and passions and yet remain detached or untouched by it. Thus acting is akin to philosophy. Shakespeare said "No

philosopher ever bore his tooth-ache without complaint", although elsewhere he calls philosophy "Adversity's sweet milk". But, the actor can bear pain better because he can appear to smile inspite of his intense pain! "Our sincerest laughter with some pain is fraught" said Keats.

The actor should not only contain his real feelings but express feigned emotions. By exercising his imagination, he can temporarily identify himself with the required mood/emotion in such a way that he creates the illusion of being something else. When he is called upon to handle or wear imitation objects, if the situation in the play requires it, he must create the illusion that they are real and heavy, hot or cold, clammy or prickly. He must drink out of empty goblets and feel wine coursing through his veins to be able to convey it successfully to the audience.

The item 'Mono-acting' is loosely applied to superior form of acting associated with one person who performs a significant portion of the role of a character from a play. Usually, a popular and well-known portion is selected so that it makes an immediate impact on the audience. It involves a concentrated piece of acting combining rhetorical force with portrayal of feelings and other acting abilities. Acting in such a role is often aided and reinforced by the literary beauty and the dramatic element in the script. This type of acting including declamatory skill, and effective gestures will have a striking effect on the audience especially when the stage is approximately set. Hamlet's famous soliloquy 'To be or not to be', Antony's funeral oration in 'Julius Ceasar', and Duryodhana's Maya Sabha scene or Chanukya's contemplated revenge are illustrations to the point.

There is another type of acting which is called "Bahupatrabhinayam" in Telugu. It may be aptly called 'Multi-acting' because one man performs two or more roles simultaneously upon the stage. This is done mostly on the basis of shifting modulations of voice and gesture. As voice is the

all-important factor in this kind of theatrical performance, make-up and costumes are superfluous. The artiste may change his positions on the stage to strengthen the effect of duality which is sought to be created. But even this is unnecessary if it is an intellectual audience who are capable of what Coleridge calls "a willing suspension of disbelief" which is a pre-condition for the appreciation of fiction.

This type of acting requires outstanding skills, genius and resourcefulness apart from great imagination and voice culture. As different characters are simultaneously portrayed, it necessitates quick changes, modulations and adaptations. We are often reminded of Horace who said : "With what knot shall I hold this Proteous who so often changes his countenance?". It is the voice as well as the countenance that so often changes to establish and sustain the illusion that many characters have appeared before us. This is a superior kind of acting involving intellectual and critical abilities.

The most difficult part of multi-acting lies in portraying male and female roles concurrently and continuously making voice adjustments ranging between bass and soprano and covering the entire gamut of human emotions with split-second efficiency. The quarrel scene in 'Julius Caesar' involving a temporary tiff between Brutus and Cassius, the dialogue between Hamlet and his mother Gertrude, and that between Polonius and Gertrude and the scene of asphyxiation of Desdemona in 'Othello' are illustrations to the point. We find similar scenes in several plays in all languages. A good artiste has to pick up an appropriate situation with potentialities for acting.

As drama itself is imitation of life, the actor who seeks to portray the assigned role, should have the capacity for imitation. In a social play with contemporary theme, the artiste has to imitate the behaviour and psychological reactions of the persons who often figure in real life. But imagination is necessary to

make imitation successful when he is called upon to perform a role in situations that were not actually observed by him in real life, especially when one has to perform the role of a character in the Puranas or that of a mythological hero. He may derive some inspiration from Ravi Varma's portraits or Michael Angelo's works but he is largely left to his own intellectual resources and capacity for imagination. Acting becomes powerful when imitation is reinforced by imagination.

Imitation of sounds is in itself a source of entertainment. When the artiste successfully imitates the noises made by birds and beasts and the voices of different people including men and women, the performance produces humour. Humour is not a make-shift quality for leisure hours but has substantial value in our moral development. It has anti-septic qualities. Imitation of the voices of great men, popular leaders, actors and singers has great entertainment value. This process of successful reproduction of the words and speeches of well-known people not only proves the skill and talent of the artiste but helps in deflating the ego of some vainglorious persons who think that they are unique personalities and that no one can imitate their speech and performance. It gives additional publicity to really great men who have cultivated humility. The artistic range of imitation includes even the copying of the minute sounds of musical instruments and even natural sounds like the fall of rain, the gurgle of a stream, the hiss or whisper of the wind and the trample of horse's hooves. In fact, I have seen Venumadhav doing all these plus multi-acting. He could even reproduce the subtle sound of the uncorking of a bottle! Sky is the limit for the possibilities of such imitation of sounds. It may sound paradoxical but it is true that imitation at the highest level is creative genius.

The dictionary meaning of mimicry is imitation and to provoke laughter in the process. This art has great potentialities. It combines education with entertainment. It can be practical aid to teaching when it quickens learning by building bridges

between theory and practice. It puts life in the dry bones of history and adds wings to lessons written in pedestrian prose. Children of the school-going age are apt to receive maximum benefit from mimicry. But an over-dose of mimicry may create a ludicrous effect.

Ventriloquism is the art of imitating and successfully reproducing the sounds coming from a distance. The artiste is seen standing on the stage but the sounds made by him appear to be emanating from a distance. According to one technique, the artiste speaks holding two dolls/marionettes in his hands. In the other kind of technique, he does not hold anything in his hands.

Mono-acting or multi-acting is the most difficult type of acting. A mediocre artiste cannot do this because it requires imagination, originality and creativity. Although the artiste portrays one or two characters in the play, he should have a complete picture of the drama. He should have vision and the ability to visualise the entire play and see it as a whole. For example, he can understand the role of Cassius only when he follows the meaning of Caesar's comments on him.

"Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look  
He thinks too much; such men are dangerous".  
"Let me have men about me, that are  
fat; sleek-headed men and such as sleep O' nights".

Certain passages unconnected with the assigned portion may hold the key to comprehending the intricacies and inner workings of an important character. For example, we have those wonderful words addressed by Macbeth to the physician who comes to treat Mrs. Macbeth :

"Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased,  
pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,

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raze out the written troubles of the mind  
And with some sweet oblivious antidote  
cleanse the stuffed bosom  
of that perilous matter which now lies upon it ?"

Unless these lines are properly understood, the person who seeks to portray Mrs. Macbeth cannot do justice to her role.

To be able to reproduce a dialogue between two characters, the artiste should show action and re-action in quick succession. His voice, gesture and facial expression should be adapted to the changed situation in rhythmic synchronisation and to the desired degree. Mimicry, Sound imitation, Mono Acting, Multiple-role Acting and Ventriloquism are types of acting. It is an extraordinary thing for one man to be capable of doing all these. When they are combined, they constitute superb acting and exercise a magic spell upon the audience. Art of this quality constitutes the quintessence of drama.

Such action is praiseworthy because it creates the impression that the artiste has actually "lived" his role but not merely "acted" it. In the words of Sir Philip Sydney "it lifts up the mind from the dungeons of the body to the enjoying of his own divine essence". The actor becomes inspired and lives the role of a mythological God to perfection.

All great art and all great science, as Bertrand Russel says, springs from the passionate desire to embody what was at first un-substantial phantom, a beckoning beauty luring men away from safety and ease to a glorious moment. The man in whom this passion exists must not be fettered by the shackles of a utilitarian philosophy. "To the ardour of such men we owe all that makes men great-pursuit of vision." This quest for perfection and pursuit of vision are characteristics of a great artiste/actor.

When identification with art becomes a religious obsession, the artiste becomes self-giving rather than self-seeking.

As T.S. Eliot says "The progress of a true artiste is continuous self-sacrifice and a continual extinction of personality". Such great artistes do not die. They live in their creations.

Robert Graves has rightly observed :

"To bring the dead to life  
is no great magic  
few are wholly dead  
Blow on a dead man's embers  
And a live flame will start"  
Dead artistes come out of their ashes Phoenix-like!

Actors worth their name do not indulge in melo-drama, gimmicks and verbal pyrotechnics. As Shakespeare observed in 'Hamlet', they do not out-Herod, Herod, "tearing a passion to tatters", "mouthing the lines as town-criers do" and "sawing the air with hands". It is mediocre actor who clenches his fists and grinds his teeth to express indignation and beats his chest and tears his hair to express sorrow, and bursts into a rabble-rousing speech with "words of learned length and thundering sound" or "sound and fury signifying nothing" at the slightest provocation.

Restraint rather than exuberance characterises superior art. It is the visible holding back of tears that demonstrates acting talent. Any n'th rate actor can produce a deluge of tears with the application of an onion. Schiller burnt a whole city to produce the effect of horror whereas Shakespeare made his Desdemona drop a hand kerchief to create a truly tragical effect in 'Othello', his timeless play. Economy is essence of art.

Speaking of stageacting, Ashley Duke says "It is not the dress, nor the voice, nor the movement, nor the gesture, nor even the facial expression that makes the true actor. Without a proper temperament and value system, no actor can make an impact on the audience". Technical perfection and professional

competence are only ancillary factors. Sense of dedication is the all-important thing. "The object of the technical art is to enable him to express visibly and audibly his interpretation of character and circumstances as they are represented by the Dramatist" (*Theatre and Stage* - Vol. II page 1153). Although poise and movement are essential, it is the sense of total commitment to art that gives an extra dimension without which all other accomplishments make the performance insipid. This is true of mono-acting, multiple-role acting, mime and any other form of dramatic art.

Speaking of a realistic and life-like portrayal of psychological scene, Konstantin Stanislavsky, the well known Russian actor, says that realism comes with the proper understanding of the dramatic situation and of the psychology of the character portrayed. In his book 'My Life In Art' he gives several instances in support of the theory. This requires deep study, insight and imagination on the part of the actor. It is not a surprise that Cicil De Mille, the famous Director and Producer sent a team of research scholars to Egypt at an expense of thousands of dollars before he started the shooting of 'The Ten Commandments'. With out a sense of history and a grasp of fact, acting loses its relevance. We instantly appreciate the films directed by an artiste like Satyajit Ray even though they do not create box-office records unlike some of the sub-standard films. These qualitative standards apply to drama as well. As Bovee says "Bad taste is a species of bad morals."

Stage acting, mono-acting/multiple role-acting, opera singing, ventriloquism and mimicry-all these belong to the same family. The same blood runs through them. N. Cherkasov, the celebrated Soviet actor compares the two great artistes Chaplin and Stanislavsky and comes to the conclusion that the latter's artistry was just as significant and powerful as Chaplin's, that it had the same roots and was nurtured by the same ideals. The difference was that Chaplin was an opera singer and Stanislavsky



was a dramatic actor. What is important is not that the actor should ape or copy the character but that he should get into his shoes and enter his heart to feel its sestole and distole. Total identification with the role holds the key to the actor's success. Dissatisfied with the progress of his own acting, a great actor laments : "It was becoming more and more obvious to me that I was impersonating but not incarnating my character."

The successful actor should have a personality. As we know, personality does not consist of a film star complexion, or vital statistics or a soldier's height which can be measured with the tailor's tape. Personality is the sum total of man's reaction to his environment. The corner-stone of a magnetic personality is a cultured mind. In the field of electricity there is an interesting device called the tele-touch. You might have seen it. It lights up a shop window after night when a beam is intercepted by a passing pedestrain. A person walks on the pavement along a darkened street. All of a sudden, the shop window lights up as if it responded to his presence. The effect is strikingly dramatic. The person stops and looks. That is what the shop-keeper wanted. Some personalities exercise the same influence - the same form of magic.

Personality should not be mistaken for the glamour of the filmstars who are "too vogue on the outside and too vague on the inside". They are as pretty as a picture over-exposed and under-developed. Glamour goods do not last. They lose their marketability. When a new prospect shows up with more allure, we discard No. 1 and start off with No. 2.

Actors have to work hard. They have no short-cuts to success - no primrose path of dalliance. They cannot justify their poor performance with alibis and grand excuses. They have to keep themselves in good health and fine fettle. They should have a mental preview and review of each performance with a finger on the pulse of the audience. When Curuzou, the Italian Pop singer, performed, the audience used to sit glued to their seats

spell-bound. "Women fainted and Chandeliers shivered". In spite of his popularity and success, he used to work hard and prepare before each performance with beads of perspiration on the brow as though it was his maiden performance. When one of his friends jocularly remarked that he was feeling nervous in spite of his 100% success, he said : "That is the trouble with me. People expect 150% from me". Art sheds no tears such as angels weep but natural and human tears. She can boast of no celestial Ichor.

Speaking of an actor's success, Vladimir Nemirovich Danchenko, the famous Russian stage producer, said "It depends on three requisites - talent, ability and chance". Chance means the capacity to make the best use of available opportunities. Otherwise, the doctrine of chance is the sheer irrelevant. The role of the spectator cannot be ignored. The spectator's attitude and response go a long way in influencing the quality of acting. An artiste is prepared to forego his reward or remuneration. But he needs recognition and appreciation. "The theatre is a wonderful laboratory, which helps the actor to develop his creative talent, learn the mechanics of emotion and reveal his temperament and acting abilities". Through outward watching and inward experiencing, he comes to technique. He arrives at perfection via complete mastery of the technique.

The mono-actor and mimicry artiste should be a keen observer of men and surroundings. He should have the eagle eye to catch the typical features and mannerisms of the people whom he impersonates or imitates. Sometimes it leads to caricature if the mannerisms are glaring. Concentration is the key to his success. The slightest interruption of his train of thoughts will make the artiste lose his touch with the mental state of the character or the behaviour of the person. Facial expression counts a lot.

A lot of planning is necessary. Muscular tension must correspond with the emotional state or the mood of the

performer. In real life, he should study the professional habits and social reactions of the people with whom he comes into contact. He should be able to please people from all walks of life—farmers, beggars, factory hands, clerks, teachers, business men, eminent scholars, writers, scientists, actors, singers and politicians. A man's status in life or profession leaves a mark on his personality. This should be observed and recorded in mind and memory for recall when the opportunity arises. The actor enters completely into his subject's mind and emotional state.

In a vast sub-continent like India, there are many castes, creeds, religions and languages, provincial dialects and slang. Their wide variety and rich diversity provide raw material to work upon. They furnish inexhaustible resources to an enterprising artiste.

Notwithstanding similarities and general resemblance in other respects between a dramatic actor and a mono-actor or mimicry artiste, the major difference one notices between them is that there is greater need for voice culture and command over the vocal equipment in the latter. In fact speech is important even for a stage actor, but it is everything for monoacting and mimicry.

Throughout the world businessmen bargain over their transactions, clergymen sermonise to their congregations, political demagogues harangue their party men, termagants deliver curtain lectures to their husbands, teachers instruct their charges, lovers do billing and cooing, babies babble, bores button-hole their victims to inflict on them one more tedious tale, old men gossip, advocates plead and scientists/philosophers propound their theories and theses all by and through the accommodating medium of speech. Speech is the key which either fits the lock and gives us admission or jams and therefore bars our entrance. For mono-actor and mimicry artiste, speech is absolutely indispensable. He is a quick-change artiste whose

success depends entirely on a vast reservoir or repertory of sounds from which he can draw at will.

There is another area in which the performance of a monoactor and mimicry artiste is more difficult than that of a conventional stage actor. The stage actor has a limited field of one character to cover. He can specialise, stereo type or individualise. When once he gets into his stride, there is nothing to distract his attention or disturb the even tenor and rhythm of his acting. Besides, he has the benefit of the guidance of a Director. It is the Director's responsibility to coordinate all the activities and see that every actor's portion fits into a centralised scheme. "The Director's handling of the actor is compared to the riding of a spirited horse. The Director's taste constitutes its reins, his tongue, his purse and his manner of adept horsemanship. The Director decides the path and whether the ride shall be a gallop, a trot or a canter. But as a true lover of horses, he uses no whip and both he and his horse know where they are going." It is better to be tripped by a spirited horse than to creep successfully over a jaded hack.

But a mono-actor or mimicry artiste has no Director to guide him, no prompter to correct him. He has to stand on his feet and use his originality. He has to put on his thinking cap and find solutions whenever problems arise. He needs capacity for improvisation - creative intelligence which calls for quick decisions and split-second efficiency. Thinking can lead to expression of thoughts and it can also show the wisdom of silence. As understanding develops, we become more aware of the contribution and interest of others and so we learn the value of silence. It takes the artiste to the origin of thought and the motives that impel action. He tries to probe the nature of feelings and how they work. As T.S. Eliot says in 'Sacred Wood', "we aim in the end to terminate our enjoyment of the arts in a philosophy and that of philosophy in a religion."

Religion and morality often go together. I.A. Richards says: "Art deals with morality. It must be judged with standards of

morality - but morality interpreted not in terms of eternity, but in terms of psychology." He adds "man is full of impulses and that is good or bad which satisfies the greatest number of impulses". He wants us to judge aesthetic experience like Bentham judging happiness. He is doubtless a great critic but neglects the quality of impulses.

Should art including a piece of acting be didactic or autotelic (having end or aim in itself)? Bernard Shaw and Tolstoy express more or less identical views. Art for Art's sake is as contemptible as eating for the sake of eating or sexual intercourse for the sake of mere lust. Art must be didactic or it is no more art than sweet meats are food or lust is love. In 'the Sanity of Art' Shaw states precisely what he regards as the functions of art. Art must cultivate and refine our senses until their operations become highly critical acts which protest against ugliness, noise, discordant speech, corruption or anything inimical to a cultured life. Art has a moral purpose as well. In other words, the artist-prophet must be a religious teacher or moral instructor instead of mere confectioner who is easily satisfied in pandering to men's appetites. Shaw is opposed to Milton's "Cloistered and fugitive virtue". He says "Ignorance of evil is not virtue but imbecility".

It is true that Art is a counter to the trivialising influences of life. It is the very antithesis of ugliness and selfishness. Ruskin wept publicly for the destruction of the Gothic Cathedral or Venetian Palace or for Swiss lake or English river filled with "old shoes, obscene crockery and ashes". His sensitive heart could not tolerate the sight of a beautiful place defiled by ugly things. Who can think the Ajanta Caves, the Tajmahal, Venus of Milo or Hermes of Praxiteles ugly? But mere beauty without a moral force behind it is not worth while. Otherwise, as Plato said "The influence of Art can be as dangerous as the influence of Helen among the youngsters of Troy". Mimicry has a moral purpose.

According to Nicoll "Drama is imitation of Nature and life". It is not exactly a copy of nature but a portrayal of life

infused with power and meaning. The idea of selection is there - a process of illumination and emphasis. A good mimic or mono-actor will select a piece which possesses value and importance apart from amusement. This view is endorsed by Victor Hugo who says "the drama (or dramatic entertainment) should be a focussing mirror which collects and condenses the coloured rays of life and will make out of a gleam a light and out of a light a flame".

Cicero defines drama as "Copy of life, mirror of custom and reflection of truth." Coleridge improves upon this by saying "Art is not a copy but an imitation." It imitates things as they ought to be - idealised reproduction of the original. Aristotle says "Art appeals to pleasure". But Plato clarifies by adding "Art ought to aim at pleasure but intellectual pleasure, not emotional pleasure". Aristotle also knows it. But he does not want pleasure to be suppressed. It is not inferior although Plato grades it as the fifth form of good. Appeal should be made to the right type of pleasure. It is desirable that the artiste's performance should provide aesthetic beauty with an ethical twist, as far as possible.

Longinus says that the purpose of art is not merely the production of pleasure but that of transport too. The spectators should be lifted off their feet. Sublimity comes like a flash or lightning in a phrase, a line, a passage or even silence.

Tragedy or Comedy, the actual drama arises out of conflict. In tragedy it may be a clash 1) between individuals 2) between individual and fate and 3) between individual and society. In the comedy too there is an element of conflict. Here it is more a contrast than a conflict. It may be 1) conflict between individual eccentricity and normality of society, or 2) the combat of wit between individuals e.g. Beatrice, and Benedick (in the 'Much Ado About Nothing'). (That is why Shakespeare often duplicates his comic characters to produce the comic conflict. Kalidasa also does it.) or 3) Comedy can also arise out of clash between the sexes. Mirabel and Miramont in 'Way of the World' or Venu

Madhav's humorous skit 'Kalakshepa Bataneelu'. There is no comedy if one of the sexes is down-graded or ridiculed. Meredith says "There is no high comedy unless men and women meet on equal terms".

Art will seek to produce noble impulses. The proper end of action is happiness throughout man's journey from womb to tomb. Hallingworth says "A higher organisation of feeling is of more value to our whole system than a feeling that is crude and easily aroused". That is why, a good actor avoids the temptation to fill his pocket by appealing to the baser feelings and emotions. Like poetry, art creates the impression of being "what is off thought but never so well expressed." It is not always the turning loose of emotion but an escape from it. Some times Art offers us not only escape from life but an escape into life. When we come across a good piece of acting we feel a strong sense of involvement through temporary identification. The actor and the character become indistinguishable. "You may have character without plot but no plot without character". It means that actor is the most essential of the three-fold media of drama.

What presses the signet of eternity upon many a fleeting moment in art is universality. It is universality that lifts the temporary and the topical to permanence. It is this element of universality that constitutes the charm and popularity of the classics, like Kalidasa's 'Sakuntala', and Shakespeare's timeless tragedies. In the words of Nicoll, the great dramatic critic, "Universality is representation of feelings and incidents with such truth to human nature that the spectator is able to identify himself with action". This sense of feeling oneness with the character or situation is universality. It is when the actor "incarnates" and not merely "impersonates" the character. When the actor and the character click, and appear to be made for each other, Burbage or Sir Lawrence Olivier becomes Hamlet, Richard Burton becomes Antony, Prithviraj becomes Alexander, Saigal becomes Tansen, and Nagaiah becomes Pothana.

## MIMICRY

Time and circumstance have their impact on art. Art changes. Yet art remains constant. Though things pass, they pass in a perpetuity of beauty. The stream remains though it does not stand still - the stream of lovely things that change, watched by loving eyes that change. "It is the transfiguration of life heightened by the home sickness of the spirit for perfection". Man is a cloudy multitude of atoms, an infinite interplay of cells, a blue print for a discreet distribution of genes and a flimsy fluctuating thing. Yet, he desires to touch the stars. The castle of enchantment attracts him. The spires of the Eldorado beckon him.

There is a critic whose judgement is infallible. That Critic is Time. A few, only a handful of talented actors pass the muster. Of the rest we say with Sir Thomas Browne "The greater part must be content to be as though they had not been to be found in the Register of God, not even in the record of man". We need only say with Puck "Lord, what fools these mortals be!"

Art lies in the concealment of art. The effort is not visible. When we watch a top notch artiste perform, one thing that impresses us is his effortless ease. Plan and preparation are successfully hidden away. There is that invisible, indefinable something which is a plus factor. The actor is hidden from us like Shelly's Sky Lark - "High born like a king in the palace of the skies, unburden his soul like a rose in the foliage or poet hidden in the light of thought". The form is not seen but the presence is felt.

All good art has common genesis, a passionate interest in human experience and the desire and power to give expression to that interest. It shows a passion for observation - to see things to the core. Such art, as Stanley and Glassey say : bears within it the power to persist - some mysterious seed of immortality. It would almost seem as though there is a kind of language within language, a power of appealing to and being understood by men of many generations and of men of many races."



Ultimately, there is a uniqueness in the performance of great artistes based upon their personality pattern. The artiste does not express fact but his own sense of fact, his own personal view of life. For perfect identification with the artist, as St. Beuve pointed out, knowledge of the artist's personality and his value system are essential because each artist has his own Holy Grail or Golden Fleece to pursue. Every piece of art bears the stamp and insignia of the artist. As Oscar Wilde says "In the Picture of Dorian Gray", "Every Portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter. The sitter is merely the accident, the occasion. It is not he who is revealed on the coloured canvas." This applies to mono-acting and mimicry as well.

Finally, we cannot write a manual of rules to bind art. There is no facile theory or formula to regulate the production of art. Aristotle's 'poetics' would have been different if he had other models of Greek plays before him, Rules are derived from the performance of great masters. It is not the other way. Priceless Shakespeare is the free gift of Nature. "Shakespeare's art is not artifice. Its noblest worth is not there by plan or pre-contrivance." Therefore there is some truth in what Pope says of this Supreme Artist-"perhaps Shakespeare was a law unto himself." The same idea was echoed by Chittury Nagaiah, the veteran actor at a felicitation meeting arranged at Abbotsbury, Madras, in connection with the Silver Jubilee of Venu Madhav : "There is syllabus for music and dance, even for acting in general. But there is no syllabus for Venu Madhav's arts. He is the syllabus and he is the curriculum."

But there is a great responsibility for the artiste. As Romain Rolland says in 'Jean Christopher' "THE ARTIST SHOULD CREATE SUNSHINE WHEN THE SUN FAILS." This reminds us of Tagore's inspiring message :

"Who is there to take my duties ?"

WIMICKY

asked the setting Sun :

"I shall do what I can, my master."

said the earthen lamp.

The true artiste lights candles when other people curse  
the darkness around them.

He will be an incurable optimist, "till hope creates out of  
its own wrecks the thing it contemplates." He will say like Robert  
Bridges :

"I have seen flowers come in stony places,  
Kindness done by men with ugly faces  
and the Gold Cup won by the dark horse in the races".

★

★

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# MIMICRY SYLLABUS

## PREAMBLE

*At the initiative of Dr. N. Venumadhav, Sri Potti Sreeramulu Telugu University, Hyderabad, has started a one year Diploma course in Mimicry, perhaps the first of its kind in the world Dr. N. Venumadhav is functioning as the Director of the course. The syllabus prepared by him is given later :*

The syllabus formulated by Macaulay for education in pre-independence India was not designed to develop the natural abilities of the student in a large way. A majority of products of that system filled the clerical cadres. I am one of the unfortunate graduates of the old system.

It is my view that a sound educational system should develop the innate abilities of a person.

Who does not know that the apple falls from the tree to touch the ground and not fly upwards into the sky? Yet Newton, who saw it fall, felt over-joyed as though he discovered some thing extraordinary. He found that there is gravitational pull to the earth. Thus, the scientist explains the scientific process that underlies every common place occurrence. Like-wise it is possible for an artiste to create a new form of art through relentless practice and self-discipline. When a new form of art or discovery of science gets people's patronage, it earns immense prestige.

My experience of several years has given me the opportunity of preparing a syllabus for Mimicry.

Mimicry lies in imitating and making people laugh. When I ransacked the libraries and bookstalls in prominent cities in the hope of finding books pertaining to this art, I was disappointed. My discussions with several intellectuals, critics,

poets and musicians bore no fruit. Their knowledge of this art was limited to the imitation of birds and beasts.

The idea as to why Mimicry should not get the status that is accorded to Dance, Music, and Drama, has been haunting me day in and day out. I thought intensely. After seeing the films of Chitturi Nagaiah, my mind turned to acting. It is good but there is little in common between Mimicry and that kind of art. Then I started research on the art of Mimicry with the experience gained during the last four decades. I could prepare a modest syllabus keeping in view the mimicry artists and the art of mimicry. I gave performances in accordance with the syllabus. There was good response from the audience. The *connoisseurs* as well as the commoners gave me unanimous approbation.

The Sixty-four arts of our ancient India include voice manipulation.

In the *Ahalya* episode of the Ramayana, Indra was said to have reproduced the sound of cock-crowing through the art of mimicry. Aristotle paid a compliment to this art as the one that turns one's thoughts and feelings.

In *Tretayuga*, when Sri Rama chased Maricha who was in the guise of the golden deer, the hunted animal (Maricha) shouted. "Ah, 'Lakshmana' in creative imitation of Sri Rama's voice. This had the desired effect of attracting the attention of Lakshmana who ran to the place where the fake deer fell. Perhaps this was the genesis of this art.

In *Dwapar-yuga*, Bhima in Mahabharat made dexterous use of this art to entice and eliminate the villain Keechaka who became a nuisance to Draupadi. Perhaps, there are many more instances of this type in literature which the readers are requested to explore and bring to my notice.

Apart from Legends, we have in recent years the episode of a certain Nagarwala who could successfully imitate the voice of our late Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi, robbed the bank a substantial amount of more than sixty lakhs- an instance of astrous mimicry in modern times.

### **AN ACTOR FIRST :**

A Mimicry artiste is primarily an actor. He has to act his role in the play. After making a thorough study of all the aspects of the character, the artist makes full use of his own experience, the suggestions of discerning critics, the expert guidance of the Director (if any) and his own imagination to do justice to his role. He can attain heights of his performance if he practices and rehearses a number of times and acquires the ability to improvise and express not only the external features but also the inner life of the chosen character in an artistic manner. He will win the admiration of all. Each will develop his own individual style. Some artists are suitable for multiple roles. But some by virtue of their physical features are found suitable only for a limited number of roles.

### **MULTI-ROLE ACTING :**

A mimicry artiste should be capable of multi-role acting. It consists in the same actor filling all or a few of the roles in a particular scene of the play at the same time. This requires extraordinary genius. He should be able to adjust his dialogue, acting and facial expressions to suit the quick-changing roles. It needs tremendous concentration. The artiste should not depend upon the prompter but on his own resourcefulness and retentive memory. Even if somebody wakes him up at midnight from deep sleep, he should give a good account of himself by enacting the relevant scene and showing up his verbal skill. He should repeatedly exercise his skill till he attains mechanical perfection. He should create in the spectators reactions appropriate to the different roles at the same time. These exercises do not need make-up or costumes. Ordinary clothes will do. Any language will suit. But pronunciation and stress are important. For this, the artiste should consult the native speakers of the concerned language because they can give them competent guidance in the standard pronunciation, conversational flavour and regional acceptability of the languages. Those who act in this particular scene, are likely to miss the revision of the other role. Therefore, those who specialise in this kind of multi-role acting are cautioned to be careful when they act a single-role situation.

## MIMICRY

### MONO-ACTING :

In this type of acting. The artiste attempts to express the inner ideas and thinking of a particular character. In mimicry performance, when a single-role is to be acted, the artiste should appear only in plain clothes. For example, in Gurazada's '*Kanyasulkam*', Gireesam explains his thinking and inner thought in the first page. It is Mono-acting. In case Venkatesam's role also has to be performed, It becomes multi-role acting.

### MIMICRY :

Mimicry artiste should specialise in the imitation of voices. It is broadly of two kinds:

1. Sound imitation or imitating the voice and manner of speaking of the people and,
2. Imitations or successful reproductions of the mannerisms, gestures, peculiarities and idiosyncrasies of the concerned persons.

Imitation should cover the voice as well as the gestures. Simultaneous or synchronised reproduction of these two features will have the highest entertainment value for the audience.

*Mimicry may be considered as imitating the following seven categories :*

1. Political Leaders and Public figures.
2. Actors, Actresses, Singers and Dance artists.
3. Poets, Scholars, Critics and Writers.
4. Birds and animals.
5. Instruments of music.
6. Regional peculiarities in daily life ('Drama is imitation of life.') Acting consists in imitation of different categories of persons in real life and situations of different kinds. It is possible to write a book on this subject.
7. Aeroplane, Scooter, Siren, Car, Motor byke, Rail engine etc.

### **VENTRILOQUISM :**

Mimicking sounds coming from a distance with closed mouth before a Mike or without a Mike, holding a doll in the hand the artiste speaks with his mouth closed. Ventiloquism is often necessary in Mimicry.

### **MIME :**

Mime is the art of presenting on the stage a real life situation without words but with impressive gestures and action. Mime is present in Mimicry in a certain context.

### **JOURNALISM :**

It is good for a mimicry artiste to be conversant with journalism. This will impart to him the required skill in condensation, the art of expressing a lot of matter with minimum number of words.

### **SHORTHAND :**

A mimicry artiste should have retentive memory. What is heard once should be remembered forever. In this regard, it will be useful to learn shorthand.

All these arts will be aids to mimicry. Mimicry is the art of making people happy by imitation. Mimicry can be supplemented with jokes or humorous incidents. As jokes are cracked, the voice has to be changed to suit the appearance of a new character in the story. This kind of skillful manipulation of sounds will contribute mirth to the performance and add novelty and fullness to the comicality of the situation. Mimicry can be done in all languages. The items of mimicry should be brief. No item should be lengthened beyond the limits. Beginning, middle and closing are important not only in story - writing but also in Mimicry. When to terminate is as important as when to initiate. The mimicry item should be short. The artiste should be in plain clothes. Make up, costume and musical instruments are unnecessary. All that a mimicry artiste needs is command over his voice. It is a one person show. Constant practice is necessary.

## MIMICRY

The artiste should not down the items in proper order. He should perform before a few friends to get their feed-back. The items should be revised in response to their reactions. He should not give a public performance all of a sudden without adequate preparation. First of all, the performer should be fully satisfied.

The voice gets fully exercised with ascent and descent. Physical exercise and voice culture are advisable. Each artiste should decide what articles of food should be avoided by him. Some people develop throat trouble if they eat coconut. On some, ice-cream will have adverse effect. Some are allergic to lying on the bed. Cigarette or whisky will affect the voice of another artiste. So each artiste should find out for himself what is good for him. There are no hard-and-fast rules in this regard.

Reading of good books, speeches of eminent scholars and public figures, well-known plays, *Harikatha* and *Puranakalakshepam* assist in enhancing the range and horizon of mimicry. They should see historical, social, *Puranik* plays, Janapada Skits, and all cultural items. An artiste should select suitable items from what he read or saw, for mimicry.

Experience will be of great use. The artiste should have a sense of commitment. He should eschew egoism and develop self-confidence. Felicitations and honours should not make them proud. They should never rest on their laurels. Criticism should be accepted cheerfully.

The artiste should exert himself ceaselessly. The only time for rest is when spectators clap their hands in appreciation. Immediately after the applause, he should resume his performances. Just as a buffoon in a circus knows all feats, the mimicry artiste should know all the techniques in the field of art.

For example, two old men are travelling in a train. The train is in movement, one of them asked the other, "What is your age?". He replied, "may be between 30 and 35." The second person asked the other old man, "What is your age?" He said,



"May be between 25 and 30". As they were talking a boy fell down from the upper berth. One of the two old men asked him "Who are you?" The boy said, "I am just born." In this joke, we have two old men, the sound of the moving train and the whistle of the engine. All these must be presented in an entertaining manner. All the concerned sounds should be produced by the mimicry artist himself. It will delight the audience.

The following is the syllabus for Mimicry, prepared by Dr. N. Venumadhav :

## **MIMICRY**

### **Paper I VOICE AND SPEECH**

Theory : 50 Marks

Total 100 Marks

Practical : 50 Marks

Voice & Speech - Posture & Gesture

#### **I. Definition of voice and Speech**

The nature of different voices

Speech - Importance of the ear

Prerequisites for cultivating good speech :

Audibility

Understandability

Volume

Pace

Pitch

Phrasing & Pause

Plugging

Punctuation

Modulation

Tempo Rhythm

Vocal quality

#### **Speech Mechanism**

The function of lungs, Vocal chords

Larynx

Pharynx

Vibrators and resonators

Articulator

## MIMICRY

Common Speech disorders :

Functional Speech disorders  
Organic Speech disorders  
Psychogenic Speech disorders

} Remedial Measures

Exercises to develop breath control

Different exercises.

## II. Posture & Gesture - Definition

Observation :

Beauty in physical behaviour

Relaxation and Tension

Detailed observation and analysis of physical behaviour

The physical behaviour of human beings of different age groups.

Inter-personal communication through physical behaviour.

## PRACTICALS :

The student will be evaluated in his performance of straight and complex characters-speech wise ... 25 marks.

The student will be evaluated for his creating a character through movement, posture and gesture and improvisational abilities  
.....25 marks.

## Paper II MIMICRY THEORY

Theory : 50 Marks

Practical : 50 Marks

Total 100 Marks

## MIMICRY

Definition of Mimicry

Mimicry through ages : Tracing the History

Adaptation of voice to speak in different characterisations

Study of different cultures, customs, habits, mannerisms belonging to different areas.

Individual approach to :

Poets

Scholars

Singers

## MIMICRY

Actors

Actresses

Sportsmen of different fields

Political leaders

for purpose of imitation.

### PRACTICALS :

The student is evaluated for imitating the subjects he chooses and for his aptness in speech in imitation ..... *25 marks.*

The student is evaluated further for aptness in imitating the posture and gesture of the subjects chosen by him.

..... *25 Marks.*

### Paper III      VENTRILOQUISM

Theory : 50 Marks

Practical : 50 Marks

Total 100 Marks

### Ventriloquism

Definition of Ventriloquism

Objectives and different approaches

### Animal Characterisation :

1. Study of the stances of birds.
2. Study of the grace, poise and movement of different animals.

Study of various musical instruments and their nature :

1. Wind Instruments : Flute, Saxophone, Trumpets etc.
2. Percussion : Tabala, Mrudangam, Drums etc.,
3. Stringed Instruments : Violin, Sitar, Guitar etc.,

Study of different self propelled vehicles :

1. Two wheelers : Bicycles, Scooters, Motorcycle and Mopeds.
2. Study of movement of horse-ridden buggies, Cars, heavy vehicles, tractors, steam, diesel and electric locomotive driven trains, aeroplanes and helicopters.

### PRACTICALS :

The student is evaluated for his ability in reproducing the sounds of birds and animals : ..... 25 Marks.

The student is further evaluated for his ability in reproducing the sounds of self propelled vehicles of his choice: ..... 25 Marks

### Paper IV

### MIMICRY PERFORMANCE :

100 Marks

Each student is evaluated for his performance of a minimum of half-an-hour duration proving his efficiency before invited audience.

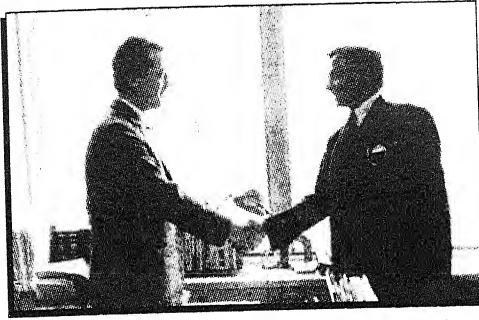
One year Mimicry Diploma Course Validictory Function.  
P.S. University, Hyderabad.



**Standing :** Students. **Sitting :** Left to right.  
Dr. P.V. Ramana, Dr. N. Venumadhav (Course Director),  
Vice Chancellor Sri N. Gopi, Dr. Gummadi,  
**Lecturers :** Sri G. V. N. Raju, Sri N. Manojkumar & Sri Rajkumar.



## At U.N.O.



Dr. Antonio Morivcosta (Economic Affairs Officer) congratulating  
Sri Venumadhav



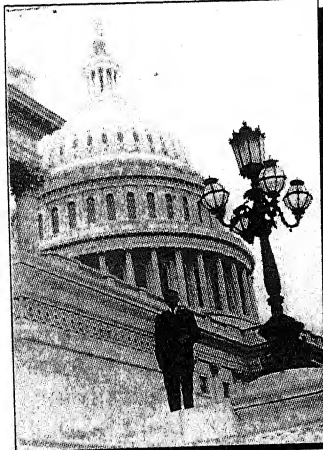
LONDON



PERFORMANCE  
AT BINGHAMTON, U.S.A.



PARIS



WASHINGTON

New York City, N.Y. 1 November 1971



**united nations music appreciation club**

VENUMADHAV, the first INDIAN MONO ACTOR to appear at the United Nations Headquarters, gave an extraordinary performance that proved him a great artist, not only in his acting of Indian, parts, but in excerpts of Shakespeare plays as well. It was privilege for our international diplomatic family to attend the performace of such gifted artist. This unusual event took place at the Dag hamarkshoid Auditorium on 28 October 1971 and it was sponsored by The Music Appreciation club.

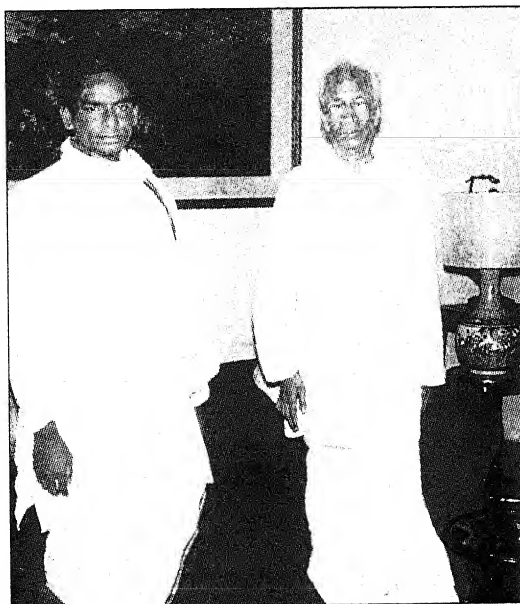


**CESAR GIRALDO, President**

**United Nations Music Appreciation Club**



**Sri Venumadhav being introduced to Dr. S. Radhakrishnan  
by Sri Chithoori Nagaiah**



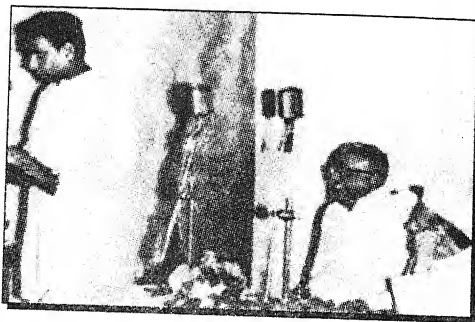
**Sri Venumadhav with Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan,  
President of India.**

**“... Oh! it is Wonderful. This is a rare and difficult art  
and you have mastered it. God bless you”  
Dr.S. Radhakrishnan.**



Civic reception to Sri Venumadhav at Warangal. Sri Neelam Sanjeeva Reddy, President of India, Sri T. Hayagreevachary and Sri Cheruku Kantaiah can also be seen.

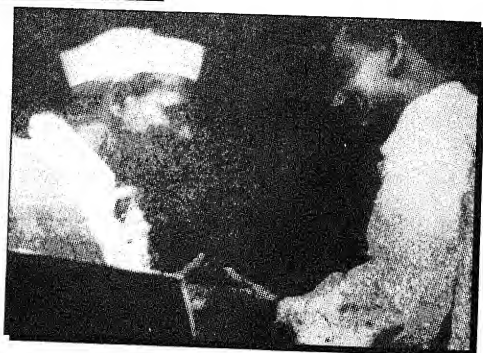
Sri Venumadhav giving a performance at Jubilee Hall, Hyderabad, in the presence of Sri Fakruddin Ali Ahmed, President of India. Sri Jalagam Vengal Rao CM, can also be seen.



Sri Venumadhav with Sri Gyani Jail Singh, President of India

Sri Venumadhav being congratulated by Sri Lal Bahadur Shastri, Prime Minister of India at Hyderabad.

"Apka Programme bahuth accha hai."





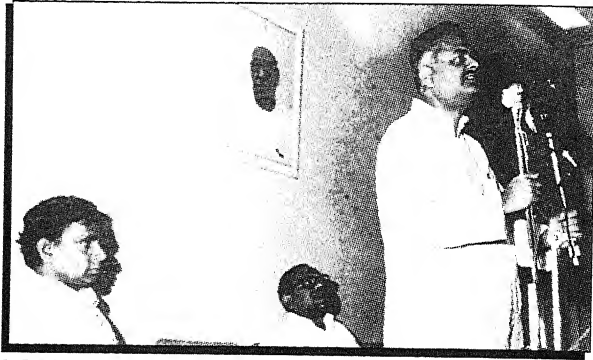


Felicitations to Sri Venumadhav at A.A. College, Warangal under the  
presidentship of Sri P.V. Narasimha Rao, P.M. OF INDIA

Sri Venumadhav performing  
at Raj Bhavan, Madras.  
Sri Kamraj Nadar C.M., and  
Sri Bishnuram Mehthi  
Governor, and  
Smt.Tara Cherion, Mayor of  
Madras, can also be seen.



Sri Venumadhav, along with Sri K. Brahmananda Reddy Chief Minister, Sri N.T.Rama Rao,  
Sri Ghantasala, Sri DVS Raju, Sri N. Trivikrama Rao, Sri M. Jagannadha Rao, and others on the  
occasion of fund raising for National Defence Fund.



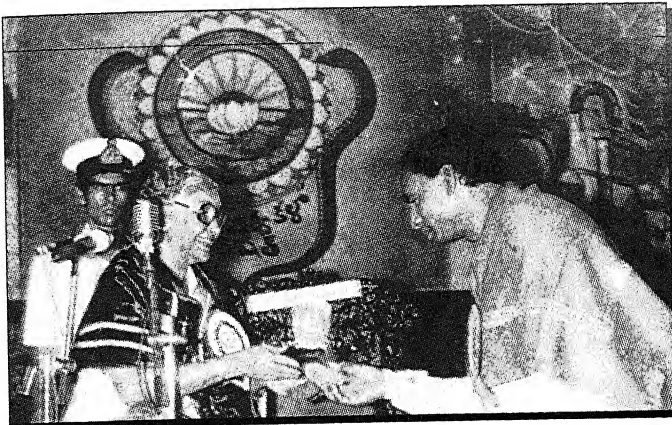
Sri K.C. Pant, Union Deputy Minister for Home Affairs, speaking on the occasion of Sri Venumadhav's Programme, for Members of Parliament at Delhi Sri Pendekanti Venkata Subbaiah can also be seen...



Sri Venumadhav being felicitated by Sri N.T. Rama Rao C.M., at Hyderabad.



Sri Venumadhav, taking oath as M.L.C. (Nominated), of A.P. Legislative Council-1972.



Sri Venumadhav, receiving Honorary Doctorate, from  
Smt. Sharada Mukharjee, Chancellor,  
Andhra University, Visakhapatnam.



Sri Venumadhav, receiving Honorary Doctorate, from  
Smt. Kumud Ben Joshi, Chancellor,  
Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, Hyderabad.



Sri Venumadhav,  
receiving Honorary  
Doctorate, from  
Sri Krishna Kanth,  
Chancellor A.P.  
Kakatiya University,  
Warangal.

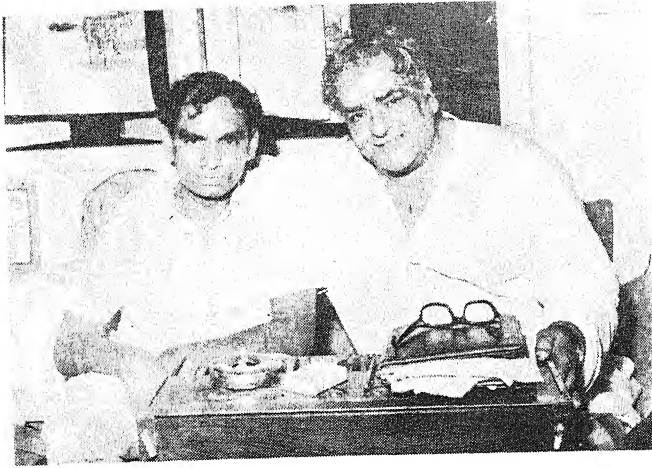


Sri Venumadhav with  
Pandit Ravi Shankar.

Sri Venumadhav being  
felicitated along with  
Smt. M.S. Subbalakshmi  
at Hyderabad by  
Sri T. Anjaiah, Chief  
Minister.



Sri Venumadhav with  
Sri Ghantasala.



Sri N. Venumadhav with Sri Prithviraj Kapoor.



**PRITHVIRAJ KAPOOR**

PRITHVI JHONPRA. 26, JANKI KUTIR, JUHU, BOMBAY 54 AS

Phone : 5 7 4 5 8 0

Grams : NATYARATNA

30.9.70.

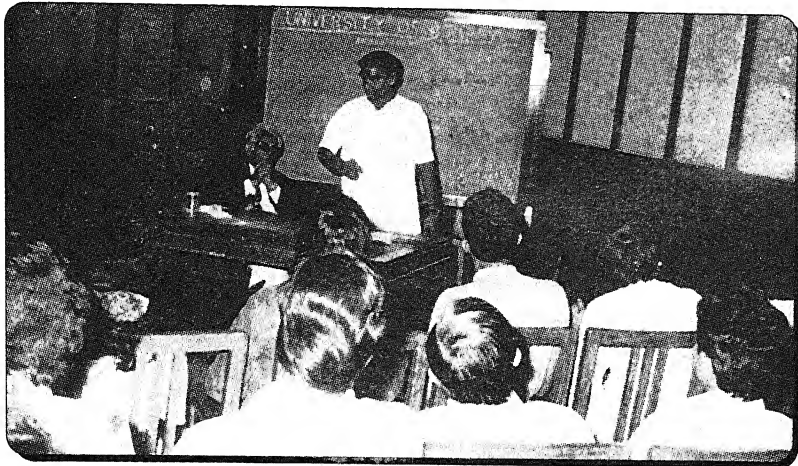
*It has Always been a pleasure  
meeting Veni Madhar ji and watching  
him perform his different impersonations  
is a rare experience*

*His keen observation of his love  
for the minutest details show the immense  
respect he has for his Subjects.*

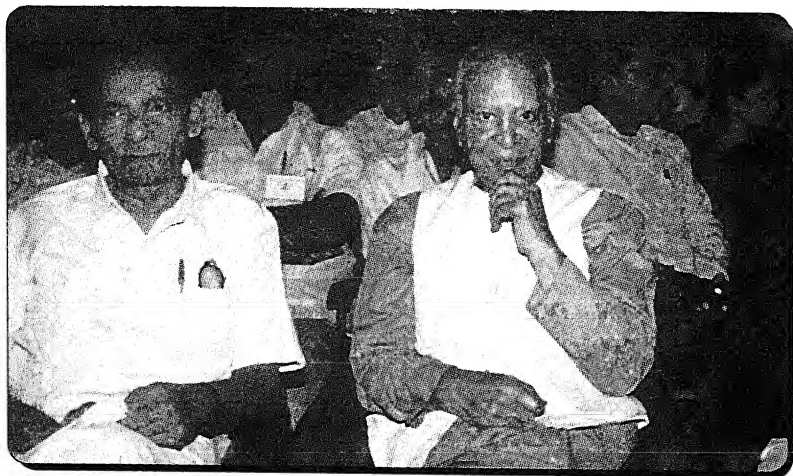
*His love of his art borders on worship.  
God bless the art and the artist in him  
y my sincere follower.*

*Prithviraj Kapoor*

HARINDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAY  
SRI VENUMADHAV WITH HAINDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAY,  
when they addressed Dramatic Association  
of Bombay University.



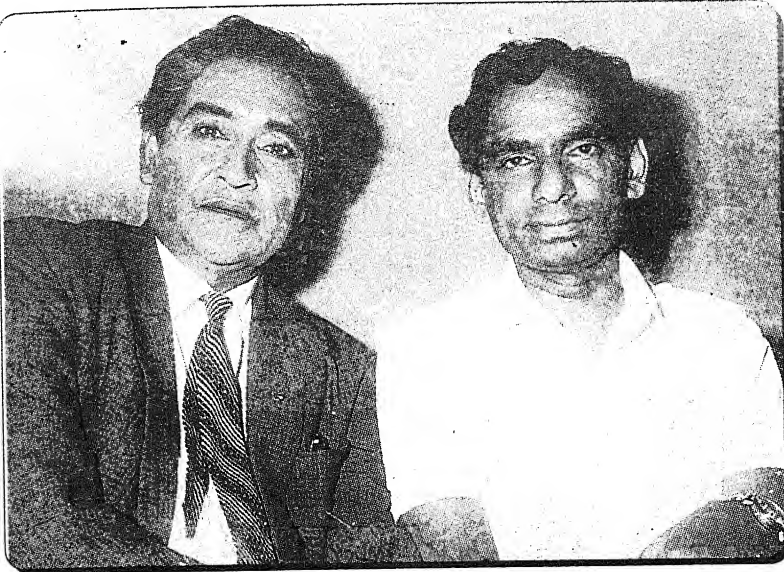
"I have nominated Venumadhav amongst angels... in the council of  
stellar silences out of which all speech emerges"



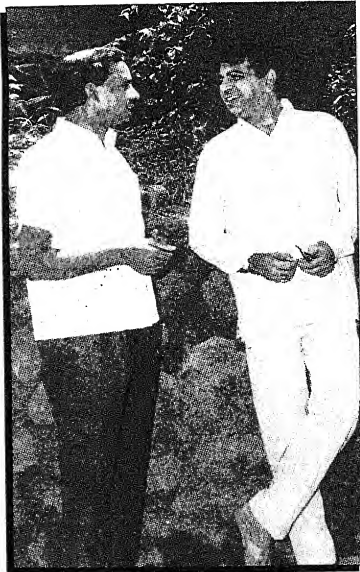
Sri Venumadhav with Sri Mulk Raj Anand.  
"Chupe Rustom" is the title I would like to give to Sri Venumadhav.  
The mono Actor and Mimester. He is surely one of the most brilliant  
mimics in the world. And I hope his talents will prevail and he will  
give us the gift of laughing at ourselves."

Mulkraj Anand





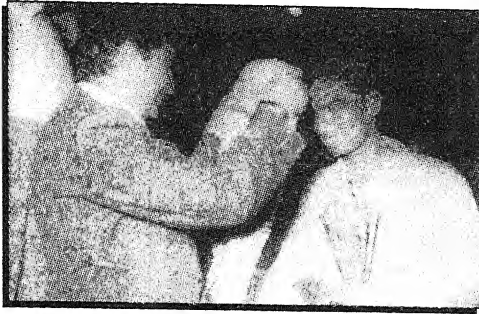
Sri Venumadhav with Sri Ashok Kumar.



Sri Venumadhav with  
Sri Dilip Kumar.



Sri Venumadhav with Sri Balraj Sahni.  
Mr.Venumadhav delights me, as he  
delights audience all over India..



At Vijayavada  
Sri Venumadhav being  
felicitated by  
Sri Raj Kapoor.  
"Your performance is  
wonderful."

At Bombay  
Sri Venumadhav with  
Smt. Nargis Dutt.



At Bombay Sri Venumadhav  
with Sri Ameen Sayani,  
Sri K.P. Atma, Sri Sanjeev  
Kumar, Sri Vanshiplay on the  
occasion of a gettogether.

At Bombay Venumadhav, with  
Sri A. Ramesh,  
Sri Laxmikanth, Sri Jitendra,  
Sri Pyarelal, Sri Anand Bakshi,  
Sri K.P. Atma.







Sri Venumadhav, with the Film Writer's Association Members, at Bombay on the occasion of his Performance Sri Ramanand Sagar, Sri Majrooh Sulthan Puri, Pandit Mukram Sharma can also be seen.



Sri Venumadhav, with Smt. Suman Kalyanpur and R.S. Kalyanpur at Toronto, Canada.



Sri Venumadhav, with popular Comedians, on the occasion of Felicitation to Sri Gandikota Joginadam (Guru of Sri Relangi) at Madras. Sri Relangi, Sri V. Nagaiah, Sri K. Siva Rao, Sri Nalla Rammurthy, Sri Peketii Sivaram, and Sri A.V. Subba Rao are also present.



Felicitations to Sri Venumadhav, and Smt. Hemamalini,  
at Shanmukhananda Hall, Bombay.



Sri Venumadhav meets  
Sri Kishore Kumar in a show  
at Shanmukhananda Hall,  
Bombay.



Sri Venumadhav, with  
Smt.Tanguturi Surya Kumari at  
London Air Port.



Sri Venumadhav with Sri Gopikrishna at Singapore.

"The wonderful and well-known talent of Sri Venumadhav casts its spell on me. I was privileged to have him in my troupe during a cultural visit to Singapore. His impact there was great. All artistes, diplomats and Indians living in Singapore acclaimed his merit.

Sri Venumadhav is one of those highly talented artistes who is uniquely qualified to represent our Country abroad in all its many excellent aspects of ancient and modern culture.

I have the good fortune of knowing Sri Venumadhavji very intimately. He is a perfect gentleman, affable and loving in his manner. Sri Venumadhav wins the appreciations of one and all.

I wish him long life and prosperity."

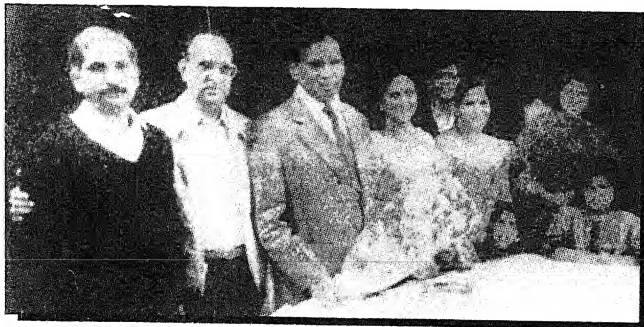
- Gopikrishna



Sri Venumadhav at Verulam, South Africa Civic Reception.



Sri Venumadhav with Mrs. Ludi, First Lady, Petermaritzburg, South Africa.



Sri Venumadhav being felicitated at Abu Dhabi by Indian Association.



Sri Venumadhav being interviewed by Sydney Radio, Australia.



Sri Venumadhav and  
Dr.C. Narayana Reddy being  
felicitated by Sri K. Jaggaiah,  
on behalf of Kalaprabhasa.  
and Sri Akkineni Nageshwara  
Rao, presided.

Felicitations to  
Sri Venumadhav, by  
Mr. John Lever, at  
Bombay.



Sri Venumadhav, participating in a Festival of Humour, at New Delhi,  
with Sri Gollapudi Maruthi Rao,  
Sri D.V. Narasa Raju, Smt. V. Rama Devi, Governor,  
Sri G.V. G. Krishna Moorthy, Election Commissioner

## VENUMADHAV - THE ARTISTE

Nerella Venumadhav is a gifted wizard of mimicry and a versatile artiste. The perfume of his fame as master of the technique of mimicry, multiple-role acting, mono-acting and ventriloquism spread to the far corners of the world -U.S.A., Canada, France, United Kingdom, Australia, West Germany, Malaysia, Fiji, Lebanon, Mauritius, Singapore, Behrin and Seychelles, etc., He is a veritable globe-trotter who is like Shakespeare's Ariel "girdling the globe".

Venumadhav was the first Indian mono-actor to perform at the United Nations where the heads of states, delegates and ambassadors remained spell-bound. Excerpts from the leading new-papers and what the world figures thought and wrote of him appear in the pages of this book elsewhere. His presentation of scenes from 'Hamlet', 'Othello' and 'Julius Caesar' in the packed theatres of Europe and America reminded the audience of Sir Laurence Olivier. No wonder, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the former President of India remarked: "Oh! It is wonderful. This is a rare and difficult art and you have mastered it."

Born in the historic town of Warangal in Andhra Pradesh on December 28, 1932, he had a fairly good schooling and a uniformly brilliant record of cultural activities. Providentially, he had heredity and environment which were congenial for the flowering of his artistic genius. A certain scholar did research to find out the factors that usually produced great men. Following the method of random sampling, he studied the lives of several great men who belonged to different walks of life. The results of his research showed that wherever there was greatness, one of the three influences were in the background -1) example of the father 2) training of the mother and 3) inspiration of the teacher.

Venumadhav inherited some of the noble characteristics and talents of his parents. Their example moulded his mind.

His father was a good speaker capable of imitating some of the great men with whom he came into contact. He spoke fluent English. He was admired by all for his accent and style of speaking. Those were the days of British rule in India. When George the Prince of Wales (heir apparent to the throne of England) visited India and the Nizam's Dominions, the Government arranged a shikar for him at Pakala, Warangal District. As people who could speak English were not too many in those days, Venumadhav's father was commissioned by the Subedar to engage the Prince. The royal guest was so overwhelmingly pleased with his conversation and deportment that he asked whether he had his education in London. Such was the impression created by his father who spoke faultless English.

Besides he was a man of dignity, self-respect and personal rectitude. He resigned his job as Sub-divisional officer when a superior officer spoke to him in a manner that was insulting to his honour. Although he appreciated his son's artistic talents and keen interest in visual and performing arts, he used to advise him to tone down his enthusiasm till he finished his education. But Venumadhav allowed arts to be his obsession and sometimes incurred his father's wrath. Once, as Venumadhav entered the house after seeing an English film, 'Scaramouch' his father lost his temper and threw his walking stick at him. As the latter ducked and successfully avoided being hit by the missile, his father shouted at him "Your entire future will be in art. You will live only in art." These angry but prophetic words eventually proved to be an invaluable blessing in making his life's dream come true. As we know, art is his profession as well as his mission in life.

During the formative years of his life his mother's influence was no less powerful. She was fond of singing



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devotional songs particularly Kirtanas of Ramadas, who was a great and almost legendary devotee of Rama. When her husband sometimes made fun of her for certain technical faults in music, she used to say that devotion was the all-important factor in singing and tune and rhythm were only ancillary things. Her dear son inherited from her a flair for singing and an intense devotional nature. To day when Venumadhav sings devotional music or speaks about saints and even men for whom he feels the highest esteem, his eyes become moist and his voice quivers with emotion.

Having lost his mother and father in early life, the former when he was studying 3rd class and the latter when he finished his Intermediate, he persisted in his studies and pursuit of art and eventually acquired the degree of Bachelor of Arts (B.A., and B.Com.) and that of B.Ed. Even as a college student, he played a leadership role in cultural activities. He was elected as Secretary of the Cultural Association and nominated as Sports General Captain.

He always avoided stereo-types and the beaten tracks and longed for doing something original and novel. He acted in several dramas. In connection with the College Day, he successfully imitated most of his teachers. His performance drew applause and all the teachers were mightily pleased because his manner was gentle and did not cause offence to any one. At his instance, the students gave fancy prizes to all their teachers, setting up a delightful precedent for the succeeding batches of students to follow.

Once he went to the college when there was a group photo wearing motley dress consisting of a loud coloured Sherwani, trousers, chappals and a Gandhi cap. When the Principal stared at his odd assortment of garments, he had the comic sense to tell him that his dress was a demonstrative proof of the blend of all the diverse cultures of India and that he was a committed Cosmopolite!



Venumadhav's talent was encouraged and amply rewarded by Principal B.V. Ramanarasu (father of Sri B.P.R. Vithal, I.A.S.), who gave him the necessary incentives. Whenever eminent men like Dr. S. Bhagvantam visited the college, the Principal asked him to imitate his speech and manner. This was done right in their presence. This experience gave the budding artiste the needed practice as well as publicity. Soon, word went round that Venumadhav was a great entertainer and a mimicry artiste.

He knew that movies supplied the necessary raw material for his art. He was understandably enamoured of English films. But his passion for cinema-going was hampered by his father's taboos. He had to steal money now and then, avoiding his father's vigilance to satisfy this irrepressible urge. Once the Principal saw Venumadhav in dampened spirits and enquired the reason for his dejection. He confessed the truth and told him that he badly needed pocket money to satisfy his craving for the picture house. The Principal told him Lord Clive's story and immediately sanctioned him a bursary of the value of Rs. 60/-. When the staff told the Principal that Venumadhav was not on top of the class for proficiency in studies, the Principal brushed aside their objections saying that he made the award for his good conduct. A bursary was never put to a better use! He saw twenty eight films with that money. After seeing the last one, he went to the Principal's house and presented mimicry of selected scenes from each of the films. The Principal was beside himself with joy and patted him on the shoulder with tears welling up in his compassionate eyes and prophesied "One day, you will become a great artiste."

As Secretary of the Cultural Association he gave proof of his organising ability, tact and leadership qualities. Besides being able to conduct a variety of programmes and competitions in fine arts, he conducted a fund-raising campaign through a benefit drama for the poor students of the college. The success of the drama provided aesthetic pleasure combined with monetary

assistance to the deserving. This was only the beginning of his charity shows which increased in number as he gained greater popularity and success as mimicry artist.

Now came the time for him to make decisions about his future by choosing a profession, because early death of his parents cast on him the role of the bread-winner of the family. Principal Ramanarsu offered to put in a word and use his good offices to get him a job in the office of the District Treasury. Venumadhav politely declined the offer as he already made up his mind to become a teacher. He was always attracted to the teaching profession for its noble traditions and congenial atmosphere for practice and improvement of his arts. The District Educational Officer, who took a special liking for him, appointed him as a teacher and posted him to Hanamkonda (a part of Warangal). Henceforth G.C.S. Middle School became the scene of his artistic operations and his fame began to spread. He was invited to schools and colleges where he delighted the audience with his versatile art.

Kenneth Eble, the great educationist, defined teaching as a performing art. A successful teacher possesses a sense of the theatre. He humanises the material and dramatises the class-room situation and turns both of them into teachable moments. Otherwise, teaching is a rigid, mechanical and uncreative activity. This being so, Venumadhav was in the happy position of one whose hobby was also his profession! In such circumstances, teaching was not a ritual. The class was not a captive audience. He instructed and regaled them. There were no truants and drop-outs in his class.

He taught Indian History, British History and Geography. He infused life into the dry bones of History by making the characters live before his class. Studying their portraits carefully and imagining their facial expressions and modulations of voice, he used to enact before the class the shifting scenes of drama which presented a procession of characters – Henry II,

Annboline, Thomas Becket, Julius Caesar, Akbar, Shivaji and Aurangazib. He imagined and demonstrated how Becket was murdered, John Wyclife preached the Bible and St. Augustine purchased the slaves in the market place. He could give imaginary rendering of select scenes from popular novels and books like Wuthering Heights, Oliver Twist, A.G. Gardner's Essays and, the Vanity Fair.

Joan of Arc was his favourite heroine whose patriotism made an indelible impression on his mind.

He used to demonstrate to his students how she roused the patriotism of her country men, addressing them mounted on horse-back. He put so much feeling into his performance that it took five minutes for them to come out of the mood. The response was instantaneous. The effect was electrical. As he contemplated her love for her motherland and worked himself into the mood, tears used to trickle down his cheeks. Students sat glued to their seats, spell-bound. Later when he visited Paris, he made it a point to include in his itinery a visit to Joan of Arc's Equestrian Statue. As he stood before the statue petrified, history flashed in his mind.

Venumadhav was in active service as teacher for eighteen years. During this period, he gave several benefit performances for some worthy cause or the other, using up all his casual leave. Sri P.V. Narasimha Rao, the then Education Minister, admired his talent. When Venumadhav casually complained to him that his casual leave was insufficient and that he was in need of extra leave, the Minister advised him to submit an application. Later on, when he requested the Minister to pass the orders on the file and proceeded to give the date and number of his reference, the latter said : "Venu Madhav, you need not quote these particulars. You are a well-known artiste. When I see your name, I can easily identify the case. Please don't bother about it." He was sanctioned 15 days Special Casual Leave. Subsequently, the Education

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Minister became Chief Minister and Venunadhav was nominated as a member of the Legislative Council.

In those post-independence days when India had just then begun to breathe the oxygen of new-won freedom, colleges started the practice of conducting cultural celebrations. During those three or four days (some times a whole week) eminent speakers, artistes and writers used to be honoured by students. It was a healthy tradition because students who were receiving western education had a welcome change when activities were conducted with accent on Indian culture. Men and women who achieved high distinction in arts and literature were invited to these college meetings to serve as a source of inspiration to students. Although the British rule became a thing of the forgotten past, this tradition lingered on in most places in Andhra Pradesh. Venunadhav was invited to these college meetings where his mimicry was in great demand.

As Nagaiah, the veteran actor, remarked : "there is syllabus for music and dance. There is syllabus even for acting. But there is no syllabus for Venu Madhav's mimicry and mono-acting. He is the syllabus and he is the curriculum". Through his own genius and ingenuity, he evolved a technique which combines mono-acting, mimicry and Ventriloquism and multi-role acting.

The writer saw his performance at several places - Cuddapah, Karimnagar, Warangal, Eluru, Kakinada and Hyderabad. He has an inexhaustible repertoire of items from which he selected suitable ones for each occasion. His versatility was matched only by his resourcefulness. He forged his own tools and fabricated his own design and strategies. Every person and everything in life are grist to his mill and raw material for his art.

He did mimicry and mono-acting in several languages - English, Telugu, Hindi and Urdu. In an unforgettable manner, he presented scenes from Shakespeare's 'Hamlet', 'Othello',

'Macbeth', 'Julius Caesar' and Sheridan's 'School for Scandal'. He did juicy bits from popular films like "The Ten Commandments", 'Samson and Delilah', 'Benhur', 'Macanna's Gold', 'Panic in Bangkok' and 'Dr. No.' His accent and pronunciation of English conformed to western standards. He created the illusion that one was listening to the characters themselves. He "incarnated" the characters and did not merely "impersonate" them.

With equal proficiency he presented scenes from 'Panda vodyoga Vijayalu', 'Kanyasulkam', 'Vipranarayana', 'Prahlada' and 'Roshanara'. Besides, he entertained the audience with scenes and situations from his own plays and humorous skits with improvised situations designed for the delectation of the audience.

One of his longer items was a 45 minute programme on Pronunciation of English. He gave this performance for the first time in Bombay in connection with Harindranath Chattopadhyaya's birthday celebrations. He delighted the elite audience with a demonstration of English as spoken in various countries -America, United Kingdom, Australia, Fiji, Canada and the different States of India. His linguistic imitation ranged from R.P. to Cockney (London Slang). He had shown how American English was different from the Queen's English. No wonder, George Bernard Shaw said "England and America are two countries divided by the same language!"

Venumadhav gave his performances in the World's most popular theatres at London, New York, Los Angeles (East and West Hall and San Gabriel Auditorium). When he performed a scene from 'Hamlet' in the thronged theatre, the audience expressed their desire that he should imitate the famous Holly Wood actors. He showed them how the piece would have been done by Danny Kay, Sean Connory, James Mason, Charlton Heston, Yule Briner, Peter Utohl, Paul Muni, Richard Burton,

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Marlon Brando, Gregory Peck, Stewart Granger, Victor Mature, John Guilgid, Red Skelton, Spencer Stracy, Robert Mitchim etal. As the artiste reeled off line by line in split-second voice adjustments portraying the required degree of emotion, he received wild plaudits from the responsive gathering. It really needed guts for an Indian to perform before such sophisticated audiences.

In Hunter College Auditorium at New York, he gave a demonstration of mono-acting of the bed-room scene in 'Othello' when the black moor asphyxiates his beloved Desdemona. The dialogue between the two-the man and the woman-and the dramatic element were presented in such a superb manner that it took four minutes for the applause to die down!

During his London visit, Venumadhav was a guest at the London residence of Catherine Lambert, the voice culturist of international reputation. He gave a performance in response to the request of the distinguished guests.

He was the first Indian artist to be invited to give a performance of mimicry and mono-acting at the United Nations Organisation. He presented a scene form 'Hamlet' in which he "ably impersonated" Hamlet, Gertrude and Polonius. He also presented a scene form 'Othello'. This performance demonstrated his complete mastery of the vocal chords in successfully modulating his voice to span the entire range from bass to soprano. He also delivered speeches in imitation of Dr. Radhakrishnan and President Kennedy. On any showing, ti was prestigious performance of which any artiste should be legitimately proud.

He gave a performance in the National Theatre in Singapore which was appreciated by representatives of many nationalities. He was felicitated in the Rastrapathi Bhavan at Delhi by President Giri and a few special Invitees. When Smt. Sarasvathy Giri, the President's consort, who herself wrote poetry, desired that he should say how Kavi Samrat Viswanadha Satyanarayana

(Poet Laureate and winner of the coveted award of Gnanapeetha) would recite her verses, he gave a delightful imitation. He reproduced the poet's mannerisms and charming style of recitation so successfully that there was uncontrollable laughter. Poet Viswanadha Satyanarayana admired his art and dedicated his own book 'Sivarpanam' to Venumadhav at a special function at Vijayawada.

His mimicry in Telugu is known not only to the people of Andhra Pradesh but also to the Telugu speaking people living in the whole world. He successfully imitated (1) literary men like Viswanatha Satyanarayana, (2) Stage actors like Sthanam Narasimha Rao, Madhavapeddi, Suri Babu, Jaggayya, and Banda Kanakalingeswarrao (3) Cine Actors like Nagaiah, Nageswara Rao, N.T. Rama Rao, S.V. Ranga Rao, Mukkamala, Relangi, Gummadi, Jaggayya and Padmanabham (4) Politicians and leaders like Prakasam, Pattabhi, (5) The Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh, past and present (6) Musicians like Bala Murali, Nagaiah, Ghantasala and (7) Women artistes like Bhanumathi, Subbalakshmi, Suseela and Kannamba. Apart from the few samples noted above, he could 're-incarnate' any person whatever his profession, status or language. He could hold audiences consisting of thousands of people spell-bound with an exhibition of his versatile talent and proficiency in dramatic arts.

In connection with the World Telugu Conference, which was held in Hyderabad with great eclat and pomp, he was honoured. In response to the request of the spectators, he imitated the dead actors and singers like Gaggayya, Kannamba, Nagaiah, Banda, Sthanam, Madhavapeddi, Pulipati, Raghuramaiah and Ghantasala, with such accurate impersonation and "Voice photography" that they were brought back to life to entertain their hero-worshipping audience. With equal facility he could imitate on countless occasions national heroes and world figures like Dr. Radhakrishnan, Rajaji, Subhash Chandra Bose, Krishna Menon, Jawaharlal Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi, Stalin, Winston Churchill, Bulganin, Uri Gagarin and President Kennedy.

There is nothing sectarian or parochial about his art. He spoke Hindi and Urdu in such a chaste manner that no one would guess his nativity. In several places like Bombay, Lucknow, Delhi, Calcutta, Chandigarh, Jorhat, Darjeeling and Madras, he imitated great Hindi actors like Prithvi Raj, Sohrab Modi, Balraj Sahani, Chandra Mohan, Ashok Kumar, Murad, Bepingupta, Dilip Kumar, Raj Kapoor, Shatrugna Sinha, Pran, Amitab Bachan and others. He did equally well when he imitated character actors as well as comic actors whose clowning and slap-stick comedy appealed to the masses. He could speak and act like Gopi, Johnny Walker, Dixit, Bhagwan, Om Prakash, and Mahmood. He imitated singers like Lata Mangeshkar, Nurjahan, Surendra, Pankaj Mallik and Saigal.

His imitation of the matinee idols like Rajesh Khanna, Dharmendra and Amitab Bachan and others provided mirthful moments to their admirers. He could use his fertile imagination and produce dialogues between Johnny Walker and Omprakash, Prithvi Raj and Sohrab Modi and Dilip Kumar and Nagaiah. He could reproduce dialogues which actually figured in films and also invent and fabricate dialogues between two characters who never talked to each other in real life or on the silver screen. Thus he represented art as it is and also as it ought to be.

He could demonstrate how the same passage or piece of dialogue would be spoken by different people. I saw him doing this on several occasions. I would like to make special mention of one particular piece from Maya Sabha which he spoke in a variety of ways resembling those of S.V. Ranga Rao, N.T. Rama Rao, A. Nageswara Rao, Mukkamala and Padmanabham. At the end, he demonstrated how he would do it. Like wise, he has mastered the various styles of Telugu spoken in the different regions of Andhra Pradesh - Coastal Andhra, Telangana and Rayalaseema. He could speak exactly like the people of those regions. It would provide mirth and entertainment when he demonstrated how the same sentence was pronounced by people belonging to the different regions and castes and professional groups.



He reproduced a divorce case which he watched and heard on a television programme at Toronto. He successfully imitated the voices and the Canadian accent of the husband, the wife and the judge. He could condense the 20 minutes play into 2 minutes and his English was exactly like that of the Americans - accent, intonation and all that.

One of his popular and humorous, kits often broadcast on the All India Radio was a 20 - minute piece of conversation that took place in a Railway compartment between a boy, a girl and an old man, interrupted for a few seconds by the hawker who sold peas. It was his own invention. The way he imitated the dialogue of the boy and the girl and spoke it in such quick succession, made it very interesting. Venumadhav was at his best when he impersonated the old man who coughed frequently during the dialogue.

He reproduced the sounds and noises of all kinds with admirable fidelity. He demonstrated how the Police Vans in London, Montreal, Toronto and Sydney produced different kinds of hootings. This ability to mimic the sounds associated with inanimate objects was useful to him when he visited Paris in connection with his European tour. After seeing the famous Eiffel Tower, he wanted to go to the station where he could catch a Tube Train. He did not know the name of the place. As he did not know French, he could not communicate with the people on the road. However, his talent for mimicry came to his rescue. He stopped a pedestrian and made appropriate gestures imitating the sound which was usually produced when the doors of the compartments of the tube train automatically closed with the starting of the train. With his eyes lit with instant recognition of the sound, the pedestrian said "Oh! Trocodaro?" and showed him the way to the place.

In the course of his travels Venumadhav visited many overseas countries. In 1965 he toured Australia and Fiji Isles in the company of Surendra, the singing cine-actor. They gave

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performances at several places including Sydney, Canberra and Adelaide in Australia and Suva Ba, Raki Raki and Lautoka in Fiji. In 1968 he accompanied Gopi Krishna of Jhanak Jhanak Payal Baje fame on world tour. In 1971 he and Ghantasala were invited to tour U.S.A. He performed at New York, Washington, Chicago, Berkley, Los Angeles, Boston, Detroit, Syracuse and San Fransisco. He presented scenes from Shakespeare in several college campuses, including the University of Massachusetts. The umpteen places where he entertained elite audiences included Toronto in Canada, London in U.K., Paris in France, Gottingen in Germany and Beirut in Lebanon.

Many of these places were visited by him again in 1975 (from 15th May to 25th June) along with Suman Kalyan Puri, the accomplished play-back singer of the Hindi Screen and his party. He also performed in the City Halls of Vancouver, Montreal and Ottawa. In short-to cut a long story short-he was a rolling stone which gathered moss and also got polished in the process of rolling. It is not fair to pin him down to his post-office address. "He cannot be tied down to any place that is less than 26,000 miles in diameter". He is a veritable globe-trotter and a true cosmopolite.

The old an age "kind words are better than coronets" fits him to a T. In his case, kind words were not enough. Close on their heels followed kind deeds. Innumerable were his acts of kindness and charity. His generosity sprang to attention at the mere mention of anything that sounded like a good cause, while he shunned publicity for his private charity, his public benefactions could not remain un-noticed. National Defence Fund in connection with the Chinese Invasion and Pakistan's Aggression, Andhra Cyclone Relief Fund, Rayalaseema Famine Relief Fund, World Telugu Conference Fund are a few illustrations to the point. He gave benefit performances in aid of the wounded Jawans in forward areas of the war front. He cheered the wounded Jawans through his mono acting and mimicry shows mat, Ranikhet, Almara, Darchula, Pitourgarh,

Secunderabad and Jorhat. He gave a charity performance even for the benefit of an individual - a friend who became an invalid on account of his broken ribs. But he preferred to remain anonymous in private charity consisting of a hundred nameless deeds known only to the recipients.

Balraj Sahani, a great character actor gave his estimate of Venumadhav's talent and the quality of his art in a private letter addressed to him. He said : "you are an artiste with genuine talent. The small statured ones try to cash in on whatever they have achieved and are satisfied to be what they are and where they are. They do not realise that an artiste either moves up or moves down but cannot stay at one place. The real artiste does not want the fanfare or the glory. He is bent upon moving upwards, whatever the heart breaks or defeats. I am sure you belong to the latter category". This is at once a dispassionate appraisal of his true greatness and the most glowing tribute that an artiste could pay to his fellow artiste. There is an element of autobiography in what Balraj Shahani said because he himself went through the mill and survived many a crisis before he attained heights of popularity as one of the greatest artistes.

As an artiste, he took meticulous care in refining his art and used to plan the entire programme in advance so that each item had "finish". He never believed in giving a slipshod and botched-up performance unlike the inferior artistes who always kept their eye on the box-office gate collections. Nor did he stop to pander to the vulgar taste of the audience out of mercenary motives. It was his firm conviction that art should elevate and edify without ceasing to amuse, and that the artiste could provide the much needed recreation and entertainment to the world's weary and the worried without seeking to titillate their senses in an obscene manner.

Art lies in the concealment of art. Behind each outstanding performance, there is painstaking preparation and sometimes a whole life time of 'Sadhana' (continuous and systematic practice).

There are no short-cuts to greatness. Macaulay said in his preface to "The History of England", "I read twenty books to write a sentence and travelled a hundred miles to make a line of description". Tildon, the world-famous Tennis player used to place a coin in the court and aim his services at it to achieve flawless mastery of the game. Ben Hogan, the well-known Golfer before a tournament practised a single shot by the hour. Dale Carnegie said that a good speaker required a thorough preparation for each minute of speaking time! And Venumadhav also worked hard without resting on his past laurels and rehearsed his "items" and experimented on them before his friends before he appeared on the stage. But all his preparation and research were artistically concealed when he exhibited effortless ease in walking on the stage like Gandhi or Lal Bahadur Shastri or Ingrid Bergman or Greta Garbo after imitating their voices.

He is essentially a man of self-respect. He expects artistes to lead a clean and dignified life. He has no respect for those who pull a hard-luck story to wheedle a few rupees out of a philanthropist or for men who prostitute their talents to please 'the tin gods of power' to wangle a few favours from them. He is as sensitive as seismograph to the slightest tremors of public opinion. I know an instance when he ceased to call on a high placed individual when the latter appeared to be Janus-faced. He was repelled by subterfuge and double crossing. Being a straight forward man, he expected all to play the game. He said "there is no excuse for an artiste to say that he has received no encouragement. Who will encourage him? He should create his own atmosphere and compel recognition."

Venumadhav leads a disciplined life but he is not a puritan. He cares as much for the five senses as for the ten commandments. He is a vegetarian, teetotaler and a non-smoker. He always endeavours to keep himself in sound health and fine fettle by leading a well-regulated life. When we discussed artiste lives in general and their proneness to vice, he said : "I always take care of my health and habits because I take a practical view of life.

How can I tell my audience, when my voice becomes hoarse or when my performance fails, that on that day I ate gluttonously or smoked cigarettes or drank whisky? Do I know the post-office addresses of all the people who come to see my performance, to tell them that I would perform better on another occasion? An artiste has no business to find excuses and alibis to cover his failure."

He believes in the inspiration that comes from his inner resources but not the one that comes from drugs and drinks. I have seen several top-notch artistes who would have scaled greater heights of success had it not been for their habits like drinking and smoking. The lives of many brilliant artistes were cut short by drink which one of my teachers used to call "distilled damnation". The drunken quarrel over the reckoning in the tavern at Deptford deprived the Age of Marlowe, the greatest poet among his contemporaries. Was it not Aubrey who said of Andrew Marvell, the poet. "He kept bottles of wine at his lodging and many times he would drink liberally to refresh his spirits and exalt his Muse". Condemning these misconceived notions about alcoholism, Cliff Norman remarks justifiably : "What are being passed on are not the natural thoughts of the poet but those speculations swamped in alcoholic permutations." A double whisky or Vodka with the deadly fumes of a cigarette do not guarantee inspiration. There is no joy in compromise and no jubilation in surrender. As Salbellow said "The body can be a spiritual fact - the sinstrument of the mind."

I would like to present a few incidents of Venumadhav's life which serve as samples to give glimpses of his personality and achievements. I hope these *desject membra* present a true picture of the artiste and the man.

When Venumadhav visited Singapore, he spent two days in sight-seeing after giving his performance. He was going in the Tourists' Bus. Most of his fellow travellers were Europeans and Americans. The sight of a pretty child of a European couple

sitting by his side filled his mind with nostalgic memories of his own child who was left behind at his native place. As it was against good manners to take the child from the unknown couple, he thought of a stratagem. There was a mike in the bus which was used by announcer to show interesting places to the tourists. When there was nothing to be shown, the mike was kept in the announcer's hand. Seizing the opportunity, Venumadhav took the mike from his hands after some polite conversation with him and entertained the tourists by imitating Hollywood actors and presenting scenes from 'Benhur', 'The Ten Commandments' and 'Samson and Delilah'.

His performance pleased every one so much that at the end of it they all joined in giving him an ovation. Everyone went up to him and shook hands. The European couple also shook hands with him when their turn came and made their child also do the same. As the little boy's hand was propelled toward him, Venumadhav took the boy into his arms. Thus he fulfilled his desire to fondle the child. He strolled happily in Singapore's well-known Tiger Bomb Gardens with the child in his arms. He had the emotional satisfaction as if he played with his own son.

I would like to narrate certain unique experiences that moved the soul of Sri Venumadhav, in translated words.

"In London I was going to Belsize grove in a taxi. On the way in Tottonham Court 'Macanna's Gold' film was being shown in the Odean Theatre. As there was red light in the road signalling, the taxi stopped. I introduced myself to the taxi driver and mimicked a scene from "Macanna's Gold". Pleased with my performance, he enquired whether I am going to give a performance in Belsize grove. When I said 'Yes' he said that the place was at a great distance. It would be economical to go in tube train. He dropped me at the place and refused to take taxi fare saying "you are a great artiste you gave me a sample of your performance without charging any thing."

In London it had been my desire to see the famous Sadlers Wells Opera theatre. One day I went to that place, entered the theatre and after seeing a few things tried to go out. As it was like a labyrinth I could not find my way out. When I saw an official, I told him about it. He said that 'no one could enter the theatre without prior permission' and a guide should be engaged for the purpose. I introduced myself to him as a Mimic & Mono Actor and performed in a few minutes, a scene or two from Othello (the last dialogue of Desdimona & Othello). He was so impressed that he himself showed me the whole place and sent me in a car.

I was going from Abudhabi to Dubai in a taxi. I was speaking with my sponsor in chaste Urdu. I noticed that the driver was looking at me now and then. He seemed to enjoy my conversation. In reply to my enquiry he said that he belonged to Pakistan and was enjoying my chaste Urdu. I told him that I could mimic any person, as a mimicry artiste. I offered to mimic any cinema actor or playback singer - Lata Mangeshkar, Amitabh Bachan, Shatrugan Sinha. He expressed his desire to hear the dialogue between Prithviraj and Dilip Kumar in Mughal-e-Azam. He was overjoyed. He refused to take money from me. He introduced himself as an Urdu poet and requested me to take down a share :

Ronahai Useeke Samne

Jo manane walabhi ho

Mohabbat useese karna jo

Mohabbat Karnevala bhiho

(Don't weep before all and sundry.

Weep before those who console you.

Don't love every one who comes your way

Love only the one who reciprocates your love)

During our visit to U.S.A. and Canada, Mr. & Mrs. Suman Kalyanpur and I were going from Montreal to New York. The Customs Officer was checking our luggage. As he opened my suit case his attention was drawn to the English book written by Prof. Chalapati Rao. He came to know that I was a Mimicry Artiste. As he opened it at random he saw "Ten Commandments". He commented that the film was still drawing crowds every where. He asked me whether I could perform a bit of it. I imitated an interesting bit from it. He called all the people nearby to the place to enjoy my performance. I did a few more bits. The Officer said that there was no need to check my belongings!

In 1982 myself and Mr. Vempati Chinastayam received Rajyalaxmi Awards and we had to go to Boston (USA) in two days. We did not receive the visa for which we waited and waited. Mr. B.S.R. Krishna and Mr. Anantharaman took me to the Consulate, presented to the Officer the English book which Prof. I.V. Chalapati Rao wrote about me and informed him that I could imitate most of the Hollywood artistes. I entertained them with my performance for 30 minutes. I did a few bits from Benhur, Samson and Delilah and the Ten Commandments besides mimicking a couple of Hollywood actors. He was so pleased that he shook hands with me and said "you are flying tomorrow. Don't worry". Thus I could go to USA in time for the programme!

In 1982 I returned to India after my extensive tour of USA and my luggage included several things including a TV Set and Electric gadgets for domestic use. My wife Sobha also came with me to U.S.A. In spite of protest from my wife I deliberately delayed our departure as the Customs Officers were checking the passengers, luggage. I waited till the crowd cleared and went to the counter where a sober-looking Officer was on duty. I gave the English book on Mimicry and myself and told him that I could imitate the voice of any musician. He asked me to imitate M.S. Subbalakshmi and Sirkali Govindarajan. My successful performance attracted the other officers. They all came to hear



me as their counters were empty. I received requests from them to imitate Lal Bahadur Shastri, Gandhiji, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose et al. They were overjoyed. They said that it would be difficult for me to re-arrange things if my suitcase was opened and therefore they would tax me only for the T.V. Thus I escaped a rigorous scrutiny of the contents of my suitcase! Mimicry helped me once again as it did on several other occasions.

I myself saw Venumadhav do it several times. The more I think of it the more I wonder how he was able to imitate so successfully the dialogue of the characters and the sounds of horse's hooves, the neighing of the horse, the sound of the pistol shots and the background music representing the musical instruments. The effects of distance and proximity are telling. Only a gifted artiste could do it. It is a pleasing cocktail of mimicry, mono-acting and ventriloquism - three in one! It is witches' brew! I am reminded of what Tolstoy said of his characterisation being a synthetic product "I took Sophia, ground her up with Tania and what emerged was Natasha".

He was in the chair car of the Golkonda Express bound for Secunderabad. Opposite his seat a couple were seated - father and daughter. Seated as he was in close proximity, he could not but over-hear their conversation :

"Daddy, could any one sing like Bhanumati, Lata Mangeshkar and M.S. Subbalakshmi"? "Yes, my dear, Venumadhav could do it". "He is a man, is n't he? When women can't sing like them, how can a man do it? What about voice?"

"That is his greatness, my girl. He could imitate any one. Today there is his programme in the evening in Ravindra Bharati. I should like to show it to you".

"Thanks, Daddy!"

Venumadhav was beside himself with joy to know that he has fans everywhere. He introduced himself to them. It was a

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minor miracle as far as they were concerned. It was their turn to rejoice that they were in his distinguished company. They went on talking gaily till the engine pulled to a stop at Secunderabad Station.

He could draw on his imagination and display remarkable resourcefulness which was often tested by his friends and admirers. He always rose to their rigorous expectations. In connection with a film festival at Abbotsbury in Madras he was asked by "Stills" Satyam to give a demonstration how different actors and actresses would engage each other in conversation, if they attended a dinner at Comedian Relangi's residence. He gave a performance which was one of flawless perfection. No wonder, Harindranath Chatopadhyaya used to say in fun "I have nominated you in the council of Stellar silences out of which all speech emerges. I have nominated you among the angels!"

Humour is the salve of sorrow. Rub it into your wounds. Without the antiseptic protection of a little irony, we become infected with the pus of snobbishness or self righteousness. It is good for us sometimes to see ourselves reflected in the caricature. The mannerisms of great actors, Teachers and pedants politicians and public men are regular grist to the mill of his mimicry.

In connection with a film function in Bombay, he was given a dialogue in Hindi with a request to do it in his own manner. As he did it in an impressive manner, they gave him a list of popular Hindi actors and asked him to imitate them. He imitated every one of them in his inimitable manner which provoked laughter and won admiration. He was proficient in Hindi and Urdu. He wrote humorous skits in those languages and entertained his audience. This kind of multilingual mastery is seldom found in other artistes.

When he visited Calcutta, he imitated Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, the popular national leader, who was a proud son of Bengal. The audience wanted him to repeat the performance.

Once there was a function in the Vijaya Studios Gardens in Madras in honour of Sri Krishna Menon, the Union Defence Minister. Sri B.N. Reddy, the famous film Director was in charge of the cultural programme. As Sri Krishna Menon saw several programmes of dance and music in the past, Sri B.N. Reddy arranged Venumadhav's programme for a change.

In the course of the programme, Sri Nagireddy (Sri B.N. Reddy's brother) asked him to imitate Krishna Menon. Venumadhav wanted them to take his permission to do it. It was thoughtful of him to insist on Krishna Menon's prior approval as a pre-condition for his performance. Otherwise he might take offence at the rudeness of the artiste in taking liberties with a V.I.P. As soon as an announcement was made on the Mike that he would imitate Krishna Menon, the Defence Minister, Sri O. Pulla Reddy, Home Secretary, transferred Krishna Menon's hand-stick to Venumadhav. He took it from him and walked to the centre of the stage in imitation of his gait and imitated his speech in the United Nation's Organisation. He demonstrated to the gathering how Krishna Menon would walk if he wore a lungi and how he would walk if he wore the western suit. After delivering his speech, he exited to the side wing of the stage exactly like Krishna Menon. When he was asked when he listened to Krishna Menon's speech to have mastered it with such thoroughness, he replied that he followed his U.N.O speech on the News Reel of the television. The audience including the Chief Guest were spellbound. At the end of his performance he walked to Krishna Menon in imitation of his gait and returned the cane. There was thunderous applause!

When he visited United States of America, there was an interesting incident at New York Air Port. According to customs regulations, visitors were not allowed to carry fruit with them. Venumadhav was in possession of our Indian mangoes discreetly tucked away in a corner of the suit case. The duty officer of the Customs Department opened the suit case and found on top of

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clothes the attractive brochure which was published in connection with Silver Jubilee of Venumadhav's artistic programmes. As he turned its leaves, his eyes fell on a write-up showing his performance at the U.N.O. He said : "What! you gave a performance at the U.N.O.? What is the meaning of mono-acting and mimicry?" Venumadhav gave a brief demonstration of a piece from Othello. The customs official was immensely pleased. He shut the suit case without making further search. His art went to his rescue again!

On another occasion, as he was coming from Toronto by a flight to New York, a customs official began to examine the contents of his brief case. When he introduced himself as an artiste, the official wanted to know what art he practised. When Venumadhav told him that he was a mimicry artiste, he wanted to know something about his art. Then he presented a piece of dialogue from 'Julius Caesar' in which Caesar and Calpurnia had an argument on the Senate on the desirability of the former attending the Senate on that fateful day. The official was very much moved by Venumadhav's performance - especially with those lines "When beggars die no comets are seen. Heavens themselves will blaze forth the death of Princes." The official introduced him to the other officials. In response to their request, he presented scenes from "The Ten Commandments" and "Benhur".

He is a master of improvisation. He used a variety of techniques to entertain the public according to their levels of taste and intellect. He could recite Vedic hymns in gibberish, using the right kind of accent and intonation for Sama Veda. He spoke Urdu exactly like the Announcer who reads news on the A.I.R. He has a ready stock of jokes and anecdotes in all languages. The stories and incidents with which he often entertained the audience were mostly of his own fabrication. One of the jokes related to three persons who went to Picadilly Circus with their three new found phrases/expressions : (1) We three (2) As a

matter of fun (3) The sooner the better. This particular story shows how dangerous and also funny it will be to give mechanical responses to questions!

In connection with Harindranath Chatopadhyay's birthday, he gave a demonstration of English teaching by persons hailing from the different regions of our country which illustrates what the linguists call "the gravitational pull of the mother tongue". He has picked up his command over the language by seeing Biblical and Historical movies like, 'Joan of Arc', 'Samson and Delilah', 'Quo Vadis', Sir Laurance Olivier's 'Hamlet', 'The Ten Commandments' and 'Benhur'.

At Sydney (in Australia) they used to collect a toll of one shilling from each car that crossed the bridge. During his visit Venumadhav went in a cab. At the entrance to the bridge, the cab driver paid the customary shilling. Venumadhav asked him imitating his voice why he paid the shilling. Every one was amused. At the public performance which he gave at Sydney on that day, he began with the incident of his imitation of the cab driver's conversation. Thus he could make capital out of his casual experiences.

Venumadhav had some interesting experiences during his tour of South Africa and Mauritius. On his way to Johannesburg there was a stop-over at Colombo airport. As he had to spend nine hours sitting on uncomfortable basket chairs in the lounge, it occurred to him that he should say hello to the Air Port Officer. After introducing himself to him, he presented him with a brochure. As they had free time, the officer invited all his colleagues and requested Venumadhav to give a performance. He entertained them for a brief spell. During the rest of his stay, he was given V.I.P. treatment in a posh suite of rooms with a dinner a la carte!

There was another memorable incident when he gave a performance in the city hall of Peter Maritzburg, the capital of Natal. The distinguished spectators included the Mayor, H. Lundie

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and his lady. They were so thrilled at his performance that they wanted to know whether his throat would not feel pain under the stress of the performance. Venumadhav chipped in with a quip "my throat will feel pain if there is no performance." Such was his commitment to art and such his joy in mass contact. He could entertain thousands of people without feeling any fatigue, stress or strain.

At Mooka in Mauritius his performance was arranged in Mahatma Gandhi Institute Theatre in the immediate presence of Sri Simhadri Veeraswamy, Minister of Prices and Consumer Protection, Sri Jagat Singh, Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs and Sri Anwar Khan, Pakistan's Ambassador. All of them praised his performance. Sri Anwar Khan remarked "I marvel at your ability to speak Urdu like a Muslim and English like Englishman". At Seychelles, an island which was at a distance of two and half hours' flight from Mauritius, the party had to spend two days in Hotel Bouganville. This was a period of enforced rest on account of the failure of one of the engines of the plane which needed replacement. He gave a performance with which the Hotel proprietor was immensely pleased. He at once ordered princely treatment to his guest who was feted with the choice vegetarian dishes and nutritious soft drinks which "cheered without inebriating".

With the same enthusiasm and undiminished zeal he is capable of performing before an audience of one lakh of people or one man. This is a rare quality in the artiste. Usually, an artiste will be at his best only when he has a housefull of audience before him. In 1970, when I was Principal of Pithapur Rajah's Govt. College, Kakinada, Venumadhav was invited by the public to give a performance. He telephoned to me as soon as he arrived and I told him that I was looking forward to the pleasure of meeting him in the evening. His programme started at 6 P.M and there were thousands of people jostling with each other with policemen trying to regulate the crowds. It was a fair

minutes late when I went. I could not move forward to sit near the stage. From the rear lines I had the pleasure of witnessing one of the best performances I had ever seen. The audience listened to him in rapt attention. There was greater fun in watching the show from a distance than by sitting close to the foot lights. Distance did give additional enchantment to the view.

Substandard artistes produce animal sounds in a crude manner. Straight away they imitate the sounds of animals in quick succession. Venumadhav has designed a special technique for this purpose. The sounds of various animals are introduced in an artistic pattern in a story or frame work specially invented for mimicry items to give relevance. It reads like a page from the Arabian Nights Stories. One day Birbal goes late to Akbar's court. When the latter wants to know the reason for his late coming, he says that children detained him and he had to satisfy them. They made funny demands. When Akbar wanted to know what were the children's demands, Birbal wanted him to play the role of a father and Birbal became his son. In this context, Venumadhav imitates the sounds of all of them - dog, frog, cuckoo, lion, buffalo, sparrow, duck, snake, elephant. In between, he also brings in the sound of cork-opening. Finally the child wants Birbal to put the elephant in the tumbler! Such is the persistent curiosity of children who always retain a sense of wonder. His ingenuity in providing the framework of story - telling to these sounds is his special talent. Venumadhav can also suggest solutions to the problems facing the country through his mimicry!

Venumadhav's invaluable assets are his voice and improvisation. There is a gold mine in his voice. If he lived in U.S.A. he could have insured it for a million dollars. It is a voice that can roar like a lion and coo like a dove. It is a voice that cavorts with the grace of a Pegasus between the dispassionate eloquence of Brutus and the impassioned utterance of Antony. He could recite a passage in a tone of assured consequence, issue

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a command like eastern Sultan whose lightest wish was law to his subjects and lower his voice to a toneless chanting of a formula. To preserve this voice, he lived a Spartan life, setting his face against all temptations of life. He says "An artiste has to forego so many things to entertain the people."

Venumadhav is a successful man by any standards. He was nominated as a Director for Film Development Corporation of Andhra Pradesh. He believes in a quiet and devoted home life. George Bernard Shaw humorously said "Any good-natured block head makes a better husband than Shakespeare, Ceasar and Napoleon. Great men are ill-adapted for domestic life". Venumadhav is exception to this rule. He is a loving husband and a devoted father. His wife, Sobha helps him in his work and his children keep him young in heart.

No wonder, Venumadhav is now the Director of one - year Mimicry course in a University. He himself has designed the course content, perhaps the first of its kind in the world. It opens avenues of employment to the youth. There will be more and more mimicry artistes trained by him. May his tribe increase to make this art-cum-science a forceful medium of entertainment and intellectual pleasure !





# The Khaleej Times

Saturday, Jan 21, 1989

## Much more than a mimic

### Personally Speaking

Joe Senior

I have said more than once in these columns that one of the pleasing things about living in the UAE is that one gets the opportunity from time to time to meet unusual people. I had one such opportunity last week when I was invited to dinner by Mr. Harry Franklin, a leading member of the Telugu community of Dubai, at his residence in Karama.

Mr. Franklin wanted me to meet Dr. Nerella Venumadhav, the world famous expert in mimicry, who comes from Andhra Pradesh, and is now on a two-week visit to the UAE with a busy programme of performances throughout the area for schools, social groups etc. and is delighting the large audiences who attend. Indeed Mr. Franklin and his colleague, Mr V.S.V. Prasad, a chartered accountant also from Andhra, have done us all a great service in inviting this immensely talented man.

#### Unusual

There were some very unusual things about our meeting the other day. First I was meeting Dr. Venumadhav off-stage but he was nevertheless prepared to demonstrate for me the full range of his skills face to face in a completely unself conscious manner. Also I was made

to realise that this very modest man is quite different from commercially motivated stage performers: his entire concern is his art and his attitude is intellectual. It is quite inadequate to label him an actor, and impersonator or an impressionist. He is much more than an actor - he endeavours to reproduce the total sounds of each scene he is portraying: the voices of all the actors, background noises such as the sound of chariots, trumpets and the barking of dogs, and the sound of wind and rain.

As an impersonator or impressionist he endeavours to present the actual voices of his subjects- and to do so accurately and not in an exaggerated manner. He neither overplays nor makes fun at the expense of his subjects; he presents them with dignity and respect.

In this way he enacted conversations between Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore, between John Kennedy and Dr. Radhakrishnan, and the voices of Mrs Indira Gandhi, Pandit Nehru and others.

#### Characters

He also produced for me complete scenes from Shakespeare's Hamlet, and also Othello, in which he played

all the characters and the relevant backgrounds. Some of his most interesting excerpts were from Biblical films of some years ago such as the Ten Commandments and Ben Hur. The unmistakable voice of Charlton Heston clearly emerged from the background which included the sound of trumpets, chariot wheels, and the buzz of the great multitude around.

All this was enthralling and I felt very privileged to be given an individual demonstration of this fantastic art. I have never heard anything like it and I don't expect to hear anything comparable again.

But the thing which impressed me most about this very remarkable man was his supreme modesty, his complete lack of showmanship and his utter devotion to his art.

Dr. Venumadhav performs in Telugu, Hindi, Urdu and English. For me the performance was mainly in excellent English but I was able to conclude that there is nothing within his range which he can't reproduce. I asked him for example for his impression of Lata Mangeshkar and he readily, without hesitation, produced that well-known sweet voice which has entertained so many people from the subcontinent over the past thirty years. It was uncanny. At the end of our meeting I was so spellbound by all I had heard that all I could say was "Fantastic" and so it had been. I went away like walking from a dream and I could hardly believe what I had heard.

## GULF NEWS

Friday January 13, 1989

### Noted Indian mimic here on private visit

*By A Staff Reporter*

DON'T give Dr. N. Venumadhav more than a second of your time.

If you do, you will see yourself mimicking him.

For over 40 years, Dr. Venumadhav has made mimicry into a forceful medium of entertainment and he has been impersonating anything and everyone.

No sound is too difficult for this master of voice modulation and inflexion.

Ten tanks firing at once, a dozen World War II bombers sowing destruction, chariots grinding down at breakneck speeds like in the movie Ben Hur, or Othello bellowing his rage and jealousy at Desdemona or an orchestra rising to crescendo - nothing is impossible for him to imitate, with faultless accuracy.

Dr. Venumadhav, who comes from the South Indian State of Andhra Pradesh, is on a private visit to Dubai. He has performed in every major city of the world.

He mimics leaders, actors, instruments, birds and animals, poets and writers and any miscellaneous sound.

"Mimicry is oral, caricature is visual," he fondly says.

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# The Khaleej Times

Monday, Jan 16, 1989.

## Mimic's mission to help people forget their worries

When Dr. Nerella VenuMadhav sits motionless- a rare thing by itself- there is a deadpan expression on his sharply chiselled face, making him resemble a statue of some Roman warrior. But when he starts imitating someone-which is very often-his grim face jumps to life in frenzy of movement and contorts itself into various shapes.

Then staccato-style, he rattles off, imitating some American celebrity or an Indian filmstar, changing his tone and accent to reproduce an almost original version. When the maestro of mimicry and mono-acting gets into his elements, there is no stopping him.

The 56 year old mime artiste is on a fortnight-long visit to the UAE, enthraling audiences in several cities. A superb actor, Dr. Venumadhav has an excellent command over English, Hindi, Telugu and Urdu.

His versatality has made him a popular figure in several

countries having a significant Indian population (like the US, the UK, Canada, Malaysia, Fiji, Mauritius and Singapore). Dr. Venumadhav, a graduate in arts, commerce and education - who was given an honorary doctorate by Andhra University-was the first mono-actor to have performed at the United Nations headquarters in New York.

Says he about his profession : "When I go on the stage, I forget everything. It's like going to temple". But Dr. Venumadhav is not too pleased with the crude way this art form is being commercialised, "Mimics in India are not well-versed in the techniques of this art", he comments acidly.

According to Dr. Venu madhav, a mimic should primarily be a good actor, well-versed in mono and multiple-acting, in ventriloquism and in delivering soliloquies. He should be able to imitate people, instruments and even nature. "An artiste should

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imitate and make his audience laugh, that is the objective," explains Dr. Venumadhav.

Born in a landholding family in Warangal, Andhra Pradesh, the showman saw a Telugu Picture in 1947 which influenced him greatly and made him decide his future career. Not having a clue about American and British accents- specially for his roles imitating Othello and other characters from classics- he used to watch classical and Biblical films for hours at a stretch to get the accent right. Today of course, he can deliver a homily, imitate most Western leaders from Churchill down to Reagan, without even a quiver in his speech.

Dr Venumadhav's father was a scholar, who had mastered six languages. But, unlike son, the father did not get on the stage. And one of Dr. Venumadhav's daughters, Dr. Lakshmi Tulsi, who practises medicine in Pondicherry, is also a great mimic.

Says the Warangal - based artiste : "I am not worried about things like money. My aim in life is to propagate art and to make people forget their worries." A frequent globe-trotter, he has over 60 disciples the world over, learning the intricacies of this art from him.

But Dr. Venumadhav is chary about many who come to him, seeking guidance. "Once a man came and told me to teach mimicry to his son as he was unemployed!" He chortles.

Recently, a university in Hyderabad, India, asked him to conduct a mimicry workshop for 10 students. Dr Venumadhav has selected the candidates and plans to train them in the art form.

His real ambition, however, remains : to regale people the world over, by imitating men, high and low. "Mimicry is oral, just as caricature is visual," explains the maestro. The oral caricaturist will no doubt entertain thousands in the UAE in the days to come.

Dr. Venumadhav gave a demonstration of his skill at the Ras Al Khaimah Hotel in Ras Al Khaimah on Saturday. He demonstrated his art by imitating Nehru and Kennedy. The programme was organised by the Ras Al Khaimah Indian Ladies Association.

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## THE HINDU

Friday, October 21, 1988, Warnagal.

### Master of the Mimicry Art

Mimicry is a blend of mime, monoact and ventriloquism. It requires a genius to achieve this blend. Nerella Venumadhav has nurtured mimicry to a fine art and has spent 40 years in perfecting this to a wholesome entertainment for all classes of people. Venumadhav has mastered technique to such an extent that whether it be a voice of the man, woman, animal, bird or musical note or even most of them together. He reproduces them so faithfully that the audience get a feeling that he or she is listening to the original. Even the electronic gadgets used usually for mixing a variety of sounds, voices and musical notes in film music are not difficult for him to copy.

He was born at Warangal and as a boy Venumadhav used to derive pleasure by imitating the voice and mannerisms of his teachers. Besides his mother tongue Telugu, he knows Urdu, English and Hindi. This has given him a distinct advantage to perform in every nook and corner of the country and also abroad. Before becoming a fulltime mimic,

Venumadhav served as a teacher for about 18 years. He was a successful teacher, for he used his control over voice as a 'teaching' aid.

Venumadhav does not require any makeup nor a stage to perform. A good public address system will do and his show is on. Items are selected based on the type of audience. For instance, if he is to perform before students he imitates N. T. Rama Rao, Dilip Kumar, Rajesh Khanna, Bhanumati etc. and reproduces the speeches of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Sardar Vallabhai Patel, Jawaharlal-Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi. If the audience belong to the academic circle, he selects scenes from Othello, Hamlet, Julius Caesar and so on. He impresses the audience with British accent and the perfect characterisation of different roles.

Venumadhav updates his items often. Three decades ago he used to mimic the title music of the 20th Century Fox, a Hollywood studio and then switched over to playing the scenes from 'Ten Commandments' and 'Ben Hur'. He still plays the scenes from 'Mackenna's Gold', imitating the

## MIMICRY

dialogue, sound of horses, with gun shots and the background music besides the effects of distance and proximity.

Once at a function in Madras, he was asked to imitate the then Union Defence Minister, Mr. V.K. Krishna Menon who was the chief guest. After seeking Mr. Menon's permission, Venumadhav imitated Mr. Menon's gait and his speech at the United Nations. The mimic received a standing ovation and Mr. Krishna Menon was thrilled by the performance. Venumadhav's performance at the United Nations Organisation in 1971 at New York brought him encomiums of the international diplomatic community.

He was a member of the troupe headed by Mr. N. T. Rama Rao which collected contributions for the National Defence Fund in 1965. During that tour Venumadhav wore makeup for the first time and appeared as Dr. S. Radha krishnan, while Mr. Rama Rao appeared as a Tawan. The show was held at the Vizam College grounds, Hyderabad..

Prithviraj Kapoor, Balraj Sahani, Ashok Kumar, Sohrab Modi and others had encouraged him. Harindranath Chatopadhyay, Dr. S. Radha krishnan, V.V. Giri and

other stalwarts acclaimed the genius of Venumadhav. His shows were held in London, Paris, New York, Singapore and other countries.

Venumadhav recalled the gesture of the former Chief Minister, Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao in nominating him to the A.P. Legislative Council. It was recognition extended to an artist he said. The fifty five-year-old mimic has received many awards and honours.

About starting a school to train youngsters in mimicry, he said he did not like to start a school but would train those who have accumen for the art. He has trained many youth in his art .

\* \* \*

**R. S. KALYANPUR**  
**SUMAN KALYANPUR**

Mr. Venumadhav as a man is most simple and worthy.

As Mimicry artiste he is worthiest.  
And on the stage he is wizard.

Bombay

**R.S. Kalyanpur**  
Suman Kalyanpur

**JAIRAJ**

Sri Venumadhav widely travelled both at home and abroad. To see him on the stage is an experience

Bombay

**Jairaj**

## TIMES OF INDIA

5 January, 1992 Delh

### Mimicry : Art of Oral Caricature

An astounded janitor suspends his mop in mid-sweep and glues his ear to the closed door of a room in Andhra Bhavan. Coming up behind him, you are also transfixed by what filters through - a maniacal torrent of words, a gabbling and roaring, fragments of song cracked open and sealed up, barks of laughter. That's Dr. N. Venumadhav of Warangal in the throes of his daily three-hour *riyaaz* (practice) to use his own words, of the "largely ignored ridiculed and denigrated" art of mimicry.

You watch marvelling as the 59-year-old artist switches seamlessly from a dialogue between Dr. Radhakrishnan and John F. Kennedy, complete with accents, to one between Akbar and Birbal, then to one between a wailing Om Prakash and a drunken, hiccuping Johnny Walker; K. L. Saigal crooning 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star', an operatic, fortissimo Othello and Desdemona, galloping hoofbeats interspersed with a ranting Humphrey Bogart: all these just a action of his repertoire.

"Mimicry remains unacknowledged in India. In fact no one here recognises it as an art form at all", Dr. Madhav complains. People associate it with men imitating women, sounding like mules. Or the standard tipsy jokes, animal noises, anything to raise a

laugh through buffoonery with the voice."

"Ancient India has classified 64 arts, and one of those was *Svara Vanchana* or mimicry" he explains. "It has been used as a crucial plot - element in our epics - Bheema imitating the maidservant Sairandhri to lure the lecherous Keechaka within killing distance. Lord Indra crowing like a cock to deceive Rishi Gauthama in the Ahalya episode of the Ramayana. Mareecha in the guise of the wounded deer crying out for Lakshmana in the voice of Rama."

Dr. Madhav defines mimicry loosely as "oral caricature".

**NO PARODIC FORM :** "One begins by observing people's external mannerisms as idiosyncracies, which are something like zeros in mathematics. By themselves they have no value, yet they are everything when attached to an integer", he says. "Mimicry is not, let me emphasise, not a parodic reproduction. It's a re-creation of situations and individuals using different elements, characteristics, voice, improvised mime. It pulls the essence from a person or setting in a single stroke, like a photographer composing to capture the core of his subject in one frame."

Dr. Madhav began experimenting with mimicry in

## MIMICRY

1947, admiring the famous Telugu Actor Chittur Nagaiah's portrayal of historical saints rendering devotional music.

"Then I successfully managed to imitate the popular actress Bhanumathi - quite a challenge, as she has a complex nasal pitch.. I used to avidly watch Hollywood classics, westerns and Biblical epics ... I perfected imitations of Clark Gable, Yul Brynner, Kirk Douglas, Gregory Peck, Lawrence Olivier, and Indian movie giants like Prithviraj Kapoor. Once while I was touring Dubai a Pakistani taxi driver was so pleased with my rendering of 'Mughal-e-Azam' dialogues, he refused to take the fare. "Dr. Madhav recalls, "the old heroes had a superb voice culture. Today's macho men - Stallone, Bachchan, Shotgun Simha - are all stereotyped, expressionless in comparison."

### SYLLABUS FOR MIMICS :

He claims with pride to have prepared a "syllabus" for aspiring mimics, which details special skills to be developed.

"Obviously, the most important one is the power to act, to emote, Stanislavsky's dictum that the actor should be able to "feel" the situation. If empathy is genuine, expression and mood will flow naturally", says Dr. Madhav. "The mimic must be able to portray multiple voices in succession - different ages, sexes, types - without a break. This is a disadvantage, and the reason why inferior mimicry sounds cheap and flat - there's no time lag provided to compose required responses in between characters. One inflection

starts slipping and gliding into the next one - control isn't easy."

The mimic also should be a ventriloquist of sorts, with animal, bird, vehicle, weather and other sounds, and possess the ability to hear a voice and memories timbre and accent immediately. He should be able to spout "gibberish" - speak convincingly in particular phonetic enunciations, managing to sound like a known language without a word of actual sense being uttered.

Another skill required is fluency in mimicking standard as well as colloquial speech, provincial and demotic idioms. Varied ethnic intonations have to be picked out unerringly. Dr. Madhav says, proceeding to demonstrate how Jawaharlal Nehru and then a jat constable would offer you a cup of tea. He works with equal ease in the South Indian languages, Urdu (the medium in which he studied), in formal "newscast" Hindi, and English.

"No matter which language I use, I try to maintain that sensitive 'aesthetic distance' between myself and the character I'm imitating, he says. "I've performed round the world three times' constantly living in other peoples skins has worn me out, more so as I know my art is not respected in India. .... He smiles, unshuttering a huge wink. "But I must tell you, my touchstone remains Indian. Before each show I do a warm-up in Bhanumathi's voice. If it works I know I'll be able to pull off my act."





## THE AMERICAN REPORTER

July 12, 1972

"At the end of every performance my audience stood up to cheer," says Dr. Venumadhav. "This warm applause often brought tears into my eyes. These were tears of joy - the tears that come when an artist receives sincere appreciation."

The famous South Indian monologue actor and impersonator was speaking of his recent tour of the United States, a visit that won him new fans in New York, Washington, D.C., Chicago and several other cities.

For Venumadhav, the highlight of his American tour was his performance at the United Nations "Delegates of so many nations were there as well as Americans. As I stood on the dais I felt quite a thrill. I felt that I had arrived", Venumadhav commented with pleasure.

But his story actually began one bright Sunday morning 33 years ago, when a little boy named Venumadhav sat on the lap of his father and listened with special attention as his father entertained the family. The boy promised himself, as seven-year-olds often do, that he would grow up to be just like his father.

Now, with more than three thousand performances around the world and United Nations Peace Medal - he stowed during the visit - to his credit, Venumadhav enjoys a popularity he never dreamed of in his childhood - or for some years after that.

Just after his 16th birthday, Venumadhav gave his first public performance in Warangal, Andhra Pradesh. He tried to monologue along with his impersonations of some of the gifted singers who were popular on the Telugu stage and screen.

The audience laughed and smiled at all the proper places. But no one took Venumadhav's efforts seriously or even encouraged him. So he waited a while, completed a B.A. course, graduated in Commerce, and then taught high school before trying again.

Venumadhav never lost heart, but kept on trying. And little by little he came into the limelight. He expanded his repertoire, too, and began imitating Hindi film stars.

"Suppose we give the same piece of dialogue to different actors," he says, demonstrating his entertaining explanation as he goes along. "Raj Kapoor would instill his own distinctive style into it. Dilip Kumar would add a touch of melancholy. And comedian Mehmood would make it sound so funny."

The talent scouts who introduced Venumadhav to North Indian audiences were convinced of his talents as much as his old South Indian fans. Since then, Venumadhav has never looked back. He constantly adds to his repertoire. It now includes scenes from Shakespeare as well as screen stars and singers. He has performed in Malaysia, Fiji, Lebanon, Australia, France, and West Germany.

Now Venumadhav has returned to India, decorated with the United Nations Peace Medal and thinking ahead to a possible world tour. He says he hopes he can function as a one-man delegation and spread Indian music and theatric ever further abroad.

## SUNDAY MID - DAY

December 18, 1983

### THE MAN WITH MANY ROLES

If only Veerappa Moily, the controversial Congress - I Leader of Karnataka could hire the services of Dr. Nerella Venumadhav of Andhra he could easily prove the theory that the voice on the tapes in the Byre Gowda affair was not

his but that of an artiste who mimicked him.

"They (mimics) can imitate anyone... Amitab Bachchan, Raj Kumar ... If A m i t a b Bachchan can be imitated, why not Moily? Even my South Kanara

accent can be imitated," Moily is reported to have maintained in a press interview.

True there is that man whom he could meet if only he had attended any of his performances. A double graduate in arts and commerce who began his life as a teacher and till recently a nominated member of the Legislative Council of Andhra Pradesh and now entering 52 years of age on December 28.

Nerella Venumadhav, given honorary doctorate by Andhra University, can speak in the voices of most world statesmen, stage and screen artists - men and women - and utter the sounds of various birds and animals and play diverse

m u s i c a l instruments through his vocal chords. There was no country, no big island which he did not visit keeping his a u d i e n c e s spellbound by his art of imitation.

"The only country I have

yet to visit is the Soviet Union. I hope to go there soon," said Dr. Venumadhav in an exclusive interview.

What is peculiar about Dr. Venumadhav is that he just listens to anybody speak, and imitate his voice, his accent on the spot. There are three regions in Andhra Pradesh - Rayalaseema with Kanna accent, coastal Andhra with pure Telugu accent, and

*The U.N. Music Appreciation Club President called Dr. Venumadhav's performance, 'extraordinary'*

*Dr. Venumadhav says, "A mimic must know as many languages as possible. He should know journalism so that he can edit what the leaders and others say in their speeches and imitate them in effective, short way. He must have concentration ('nishta'). There should be utter dedication...."*

Telengana with Urdu touch. And when Venumadhav could be able to present these accents - as also American English, slang, British English slang, British English and Indian English - Moily can be well assured that world renowned Venumadhav can mimic his South Kaanara accent too. Once Venumadhav reproduced a divorce case which he saw and heard on TV in Toronto. And he successfully imitated the voices, the Canadian accent of the husband, the wife and the judge stunning his audience.

"A mimic must know as many languages as possible. He should know journalism so that he can edit what the leaders and other say in their speeches and imitate them in effective, short way. He must have concentration ('nishta'). There must be utter dedication. He should know as many art techniques - cinema, radio and photography. He must know the accents of different languages. If took six months for me to learn the accents. A mimic should know how to pronounce words of each language."

Venumadhav, called 'Father of modern mimicry', adds he has a total of 60 disciples all over the world and many of them are now living on this art.

While he was trained graduate teacher, simultaneously giving

performance as a hobby, he was nominated MLC in 1972 for six years. He wanted to do his M.A. in vain. After becoming an MLC, he gave up his teacher's job, but kept up practising and giving mimicry performances which he had started when he was 15. No doubt, this art is strain on the nervous system. Yet at 52, "my vocal chords are perfect and my mind too is quite alert. It took 10 years for me to propagate this art. I had to fight a lot in the Sangit Nataka Academy (he was a member) to recognise mimicry as an art. It was recognised because of my entry into the academy. I suggested mimicry be made a subject in the theoretical arts course, now being run in Andhra University. I gave a syllabus for it."

What inspired him to this art? "I saw veteran Nagaiah's 'Pothana'.. It attracted me so much that My attention was diverted to fine arts as early as in 1947. First imitated Nagaiah and gradually mastered voices of others." But mimicry is in his blood. His father, a scholar in six languages, including Persian and French was a good speaker and could imitate some of the great personalities with whom he came into contact. He used to speak beautiful English. He was subdivisional officer in Warangal (Telengana)., then the Nizam

## MIMICRY

domain. When George VI, as the Prince of Wales, visited Hyderabad Venumadhav's father, Srihari was commissioned to engage the Prince since he spoke Oxford English. The Prince was so pleased with his conversation and deportment that he asked whether he had his education in London. Such was his faultless English, though educated in the Urdu-dominated, backward area of Telengana. But that father, though he appreciated his son's budding artistic talent and keen interest in visual and performing arts, advised him to first concentrate on his education.

But Venumadhav did not listen and was surreptitiously working on the art front incurring his father's wrath. Once, as he returned after seeing the English movie, "Scaramouche" setting aside his textbooks, his angry father threw his walking stick at him with a curse, 'Your entire future will be in art. You'll live only in and on art.'

That curse today proved an invaluable blessing in-making Venumadhav's life dream come true. And from his mother, who died while he was studying in third class, he inherited flair for singing and piety. He lost his dear father just after completing his Intermediate. At College, he used to imitate his teachers much to the delight of

students and teachers and appeared in several plays. His talent was encouraged by Principal B.V. Ramanarasu and whenever eminent men visited the college, Venumadhav was asked to imitate their speeches and manners, and he did this right in their presence. This gave him the needed practice and publicity. Soon word went round that Venumadhav was a great Entertainer, a mimic, a mono-actor and a multiple-role actor.

As teacher, Venumadhav taught Indian History. British History and Geography. He used to enliven the classes by his dramatic gestures of the historical characters. So much so that no student missed his class. Studying the portraits of these characters and imaginng their facial expressions and voice modulation, he used to enact in the class the shifting scenes of drama which presented a plethora of characters .... Henry II, Anne Boline, Thomas Becket, Julius Caesar, Akbar, Sivaji and Aurangzeb. He imagined and demonstrated how Becket was murdered, how John Wyclife preached the Bible and St. Augustine purchased slaves in the market. He used to demonstrate how Joan of Arc, his favorite heroine, used to rouse the

patriotism of her people mounted on the horse. Students sat glued to their seats, spell-bound and the lessons straight went to their brains. And the failures of students in his subjects were few.

Later as he left the teaching profession and made his mimicry a mission of his life, he not only toured various cities and towns in India, but also proved to be a globe-trotter, performing in the USA, Canada, France, UK, Australia, West Germany, Malaysia, Fiji, Lebanon, Mauritius, Singapore and Seychelles. He is the first Indian monoactor to perform at the United Nations keeping the Heads of States. Delegates and Ambassadors spellbound. The UN Music Appreciation Club President called it an 'extraordinary performance', while former President S. Radhakrishnan said, "Oh, it is wonderful... This is rare and difficult art and you have mastered it". Eminent novelist Mulkraj Anand gave him the title of "Chupe Rustom." Veteran Prithviraj Kapoor said, "Watching him perform his different impersonations is a rare experience. "And for that classical dancer Gopikrishna, "the well-known talent of Venumadhav casts its spell on me." The great late Nargis called his performance 'remarkable'.

When Venumadhav performed a scene from 'Hamlet' at a Los Angeles Theatre, the audience wanted him to imitate the famous Hollywood stars. He showed them how the piece would have been done by Danny Kaye, Sean Connery, James Masoon, Charlton Heston, Yul Bruiner, Paul Muni, Richard Burton, Marlon Brando, Gregory Peck, Stewart Granger, Victor Mature, Red Skelton, Spencer Stracey and Robert Mitchem. As Venumadhav reeled off line by line in split-second voice adjustments, he received wild cheers from the sophisticated audience. With equal felicity, he imitated on many occasions and at several functions, Stalin, Churchill, Bulganin, Uri Gagarin, President Kennedy, Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Bose, Rajaji, Krishna Menon and Dr. Radhakrishnan.

There is nothing sectarian or parochial about Venumadhav's art of mimicry. He speaks Hindi and Urdu in such a chaste manner that no one can guess his nativity. In several North Indian cities, he imitated the voices and mannerisms of veteran actors like Prithviraj Kapoor, Sohrab Modi, Balraj Sahani, Ashok Kumar, Dilip Kumar, Raj Kapoor, Shatrughan Sinha, Pran and Amitabh Bachchan

## MIMICRY

as also comedians the late Gopi, Johnny walker, Dixit, Bhagwan, Om Prakash and Mahmood. What is most amazing is that he imitates the singing voices of Noorjehan, Lata Mangeshkar, Bhanumathi, M.S. Subbalaxmi and P. Suseela, as also the late Saigal and Punkaj Mallick. And he has not left untouched the politicians, literatures and stage and movie artists of his home state.

It is a delight to watch him imitate the voices and gestures of artists like Nagaiah, N.T. Rama Rao, A. Nageswara Rao, S.V. Ranga Rao, Jaggayya and Gummadi, politicians like Prakaasam and Pattabhi Sitaramayya and eminent musicians like Balamuralikrishna and Ghantasala.

Apart from these, Venumadhav entertains foreign tourists enacting scenes from 'Ben Hur', 'The Ten commandments', 'Samson and Delilah', and 'Macanna's Gold'. There have been several occasions when his art came to his rescue. To quote: he was about to be hauled up at New York Airport by the customs for carrying fruit, a prohibited item in his luggage. When the customs official concerned saw a UN brochure on his performance and enquired about his art, Venumadhav gave a

brief demonstration of piece from "Othello". Immensely pleased, the official passed him without searching his luggage. He had become a Venu fan !

A teetotaler with a happy family of an understanding wife and two daughters and two sons, Venu says that the happiest thing in a mimic's life is his urge and capacity to imitate everybody in every walk of life. " An actor may not be able to imitate another actor. But a mimic does everybody. A mimic must digest the total personality of the person he imitates. He must keep up his throat and vocal chords like musicians. He has no castes, no religious bias, no parochial attitudes or linguistic prejudices. He loves everybody just to imitate him and provide healthy entertainment with no aids except the mike. He is the best and real national integrationist," says he to explain that he is the lover of all languages, all people and a champion of national unity and a one-world cause.

\* \* \*

## THE STATESMAN

Delhi, Wed, Jan 26, 1972.

### A MAN WITH MANY FACES AND VOICES

The face you see is not the only one Venumadhav has. Temporary, it might not even be his own. He has as many faces as he has voices. And of voices, Mr. Venumadhav has lost count. They belong to all the people he has met, seen or read about.

The mimic and mono actor from Andhra Pradesh has come up North to meet his friends and to give his true voice the rest it needs. In other words he would like to take his own voice away from the many others. But talent where it goes is always in demand. And the rest was short-lived. His visit happened to coincide with the President's wife's birthday. So what is today's successor of the court jester of other years - both tears and laughter are his fare - performed for the first lady in her home.

Now one might well wonder how a person like him - he was a student of Telugu literature when it all began - happened to get into a profession like this. The answer is as charming as it is simple. His professor in English lent himself perfectly to imitation. From there on sharpening his imitating prowess along the way, Venumadhav has come a long way in the 24 years he has been earning his livelihood by wearing others' faces and voices both in India and abroad.

To begin with he had ample subjects: the man on the street, the local politician - any and all who had idiosyncracies of voice and manner. Later on came the national and

international leaders. And then he took from the world of fact and fiction.

We had a sample of these as one moment he cried out in the full-throated intensity of the rageful Othello, in a split second his face puckered to match the frail intensity of Desdemona. And not a moment later he gave his version of how Richard Burton would play Hamlet - the strut and boom in the voice were all there.

The game went on as one voice followed another with the rapidity with which a ball is passed down the line - so fast that the ball does not have a chance to fall down between two, and so fast that the audience may not get bored. The reason, he explains, he would never play his own Hamlet.

Sitting there enacting scenes as diverse as Biblical to the modern cop and robber film he performs the background sounds as well: shrill sirens of police cars, trotting horses, Biblical thunder - the works, in fact. Being a mono actor he is both the conductor and the conducted, and all actors rolled into one.

And as a parting shot, he sits down in front of a typewriter, sets his face in the same expression as a colleague who was typing away unaware of the fact then and now of what was going on and repeats verbatim what the other had said a while before.

\* \* \*

## TIMES OF INDIA

Delhi, 27th Aug. 1973.

### MIME ARTISTE WITH THOUSAND FACES

N. Venumadhav is an entertainer of commendable calibre. Venumadhav is a mime with a difference - he is an artiste with a thousand faces with as many voices. He is gifted mono-actor, engaging ventriloquist and skilful crooner. He is adept in capturing effectively the vareigated behaviour and voice patterns of men and in offering them in lively, liquid stances and that is the basic trait of his art...

... At Sunday's performance (covering over a hundred minutes) Venumadhav recounted a number of familiar sequences packed with swiftly changing moods and emotions of men, women and children. He embellished his portrayals with absorbing sound effects all manipulated by twisting of the tongue, biting the teeth, squeezing the vocal chords.

Venumadhav's depiction of scenes from Ten Commandments, Othello and other Classics was as abiding as his caricatures of the Telugu Poets and Andhra stage artistes. Mr. K.C. Pant, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, was present as Chief Guest. Mr. P. Venkata Subbaiah, M.P., welcomed the guests while Mr. Kota Punnaiah, M.P., proposed a vote of thanks.

#### 'Chupe Rustom'

is the title I would like to give to Shri Venumadhav, the Mono Actor and Mimester. He is surely one of the most brilliant mimics in the World. And I hope his talents will prevail and he will give us the gift of laughing at ourselves.

Mulkraj Anand

1977

## THE INDIAN EXPRESS

Friday, Nov. 26th, 1976

### LEGISLATOR WHO IS MIMIC TOO....

N. Venumadhav, member of Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council, is a fine mimic, who can imitate any one and evoke laughter from the spectators. He was felicitated by the Soundarya Cultural Association at the Railway Institute, in Vijayawada. His excellence in the art of imitating is the result of the combination of flexible rich voice and fertile imagination. He is a keen observer and is aided by a sound knowledge of the classics.

## THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Kanpur, Sat, Dec. 14, 1963.

Two items that drew repeated applause and brought the house down were one of mimicry by the well-known ventriloquist N. Venumadhav.

Venumadhav began with mimicking President Radhakrishnan in that inimitable fluent English oration, with pieces of slokas from the Gita and Upanishads thrown in for good measure and without which the President's oratory falls flat. He next took up a scene from the famous film Ten Commandments, pouring out effortlessly the sustained reverberations of the trumpet, and the obiter dicta of Moses and other actors. To top it all he selected an introductory speech by Prithviraj complete with all his mannerisms and idiosyncracies and another scene from the film Mughal-e-Azam.





## WHAT THEY SAID ABOUT HIM :

*United Nations Music Appreciation Club*

*New York City, N.Y. 1 Nov. 1971*

*Venumadhav, the first Indian Mono Actor to appear at the United Nations Headquarters, gave an extraordinary performance that proved him a great artist, not only in his acting of Indian parts, but in excerpts of Shakespeare plays as well. It was a privilege for our international diplomatic family to attend the performance of such gifted artist. This unusual event took place at the Dag Hammarskjöld Auditorium on 28 October 1971 and it was sponsored by The Music Appreciation Club.*

<sup>a</sup> **Cesar Giraldo, President**

**United Nations Music Appreciation Club**

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**30 BELSIZE GROVE  
LONDON N.W.S.**

*Oct. 12th, 1971*

*It has been a great pleasure for me to meet Dr. Venumadhav. His talent was obvious in the short enjoyable performance he gave in my home, and I am sure he will give great delight to many audiences.*

*Catherine Lambert*

---

*I was very happy to meet Sri Venumadhav and listen to some of his Mimicry items and Soliloquies from English classics and films brilliantly reproduced.*

*I was particularly impressed by his excellent rendering of speeches from famous personalities of the world in their own style.*

*I wish him success*

**ASHOK KUMAR**

BALRAJ SAHNI  
IKRAAM

6-6-71  
Juhu, Bombay - 54.

*My Dear Venumadhav,*

*You are an artiste with genuine talent, but every artiste gets struck at a particular stage. He doesn't know the way to proceed further from where he is, although he knows the wishes of his heart. He has to make a break-through.*

*The small-statured ones then try to cash in on whatever they have achieved and are satisfied to be where they are. They don't realise that an artiste either moves up or moves down, he can't stay in one place.*

*The real artiste doesn't want the fanfares or the glory. He is bent on moving upwards, no matter what the heart-breaks and whatever the defeats.*

*I hope you prove to be the latter sort. That is why I have not come up to your expectations this time. I want you to be unhappy what you cannot do, rather than be happy with what you can. Life is too short for artistes to throw away time in empty sociabilities. I hope you will understand.*

*Yours sincerely  
Balraj Sahni*

---

*I have had the opportunity to have a glimpse of Shri Venumadhav's performance in Ventriloquism and Mono Acting and was very much impressed by it.*

*Shri Madhav's talent in accurately capturing the voices and behaviours patterns of not only Indian Leaders and artists but of foreign celebrities as well, is really praiseworthy.*

*I wish him success in brilliant career.*

**DILIP KUMAR, Bombay**

## PRITHVIRAJ KAPOOR

Prithivi Jhonpra, 26, Janki Kutir, Juhu, Bombay 54 AS.

30.9.70

Juhu, Bombay - 54.

*It has always been a pleasure meeting Venu Madhavji and watching him perform his difficult impersonations is a rare experience.*

*His keen observation of his love for the minutest details show the immense respect he has for his subjects.*

*His love of his Act borders on worship. God bless the act and the Artist in him is my sincere prayer.*

*Prithviraj Kapoor*

---

## Harindranath Chattopadhyay

Kismat, Carter Road, Bandra, Bombay - 50 .

17.7.70

*Venu Madhav (a few lines to and for you)  
Venu you'll surely be remembered after  
You have departed from this mournful earth-  
(You're going to live for quite a hundred years!!!)  
You who have lent the world a world of laughter  
And flooded with fine merriment and mirth  
Men's hollows lives of tragedy and tears.*

---

*All my adjectives will fall very short to judge Venumadhu's histrionics. His chief characteristic is present of mind and vocal command. With my experience of so many years, i can proudly call him a National Asset.*

*God may give him long life to recreate his people, his country and the whole of humanity.*

**NANA PASIKAR, Bombay**

*I had an opportunity of seeing and hearing Sri Venumadhav one evening. He is a great artiste and his impersonation of famous people and artists of stage and cinema from all over the World is remarkable. I wish him all the best in future and pray for success all over the World. A talent like his will have to shine with all rightness.*

**MRS. NARGIS SUNIL DUTT**

---

*Venumadhav acts like ingrid bergman and sings like Bhanumathee*

**- KAPILA KASIPATHI**

---

*I had the privilege of meeting Sri Venumadhav at Prasad Productions Studios, Madras, where I was shooting in the film 'Milan'. Shri Venumadhav delighted all of us with his extempore Mono acting and Mimicry. I also watched him execute a comedy role in the film, I was amazed at the display of the talents by this born artiste, I was at that time contemplating to go to Fiji Islands with a small troupe of mine. On my request Sri Venumadhav at once agreed to accompany me. I found him to be a gentleman of excellent character and very dependable artiste. His appearances were a delight to the vast Fijian crowds whom he delighted both in English as well as in Urdu & Hindi, mimics, Gags and Poetry. I remember his execution of Othello's role before a packed European audience of Rotarians where he played the dual role of Othello and Desdemona in his inimitable way. He reminded them of that great artiste Sir Laurence Olivier of Great Britain. In India he is invited throughout the land both North and South with great acclaim.*

*I wish him the best of luck and success.*

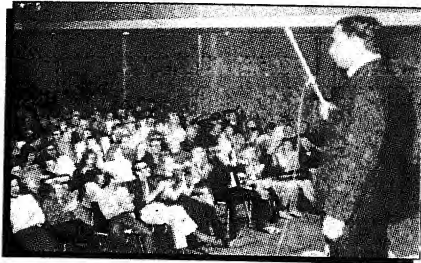
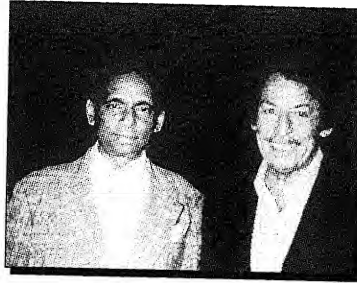
**Bomaby**

**SURENDRANATH**

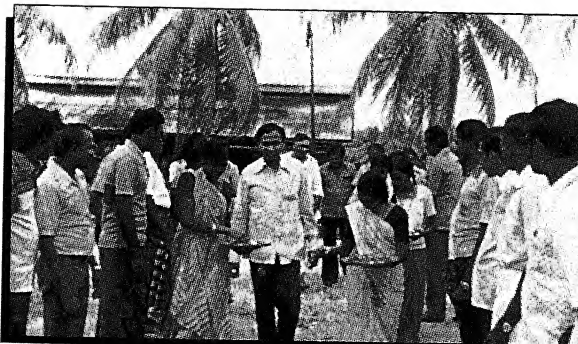


Sri Venumadhav, with  
Mrs. & Mr. Athadela Maray British  
High Commissioner, Singapore.

At Losangels Mr. Paul Pulitzer  
(Twentieth Century Fox Special  
Effects Director)  
congratulating Dr. Venumadhav.



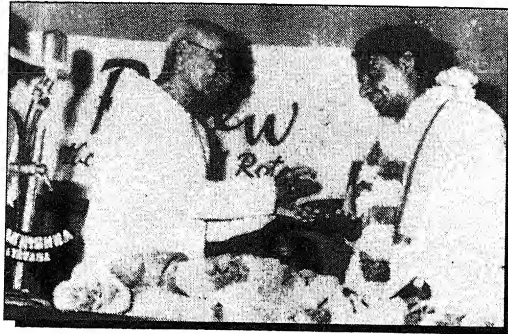
Sri Venumadhav, giving a  
performance at Gottingen  
University, Germany



Sri Venumadhav, being Welcomed at Coleperox, Malasia.



Sri D. Sanjeevaiah (Congress President) presenting Memento) to Sri Venumadhav at Vijayawada.



Poet Laureate of Andhra Pradesh, Recipient of Gyanapeeth award 'Padmabhushan' Dr. Viswanadha Satyanarayana, dedicating the book 'Sivarpanam' to Venumadhav at Rotary Hall, Vijayawada



Recipient of Gnanpeeth award, "Padmabhushan", Dr. C. Narayana Reddy, dedicating the book "Narayana Reddy Natikalu", to Sri Venumadhav at Ravindra Bharathi, Hyderabad. The Mikkilineni and Prof. G.V. Subrahmanyam can also be seen.



Sri Venumadhav  
with Mr.Zadved,  
the Mayor of  
Isipingo, South  
Africa



Sri Venumadhav  
being interviewed  
by Fiji Radio



Sri Venumadhav  
with Maritius  
Education Minister



Felicitations to  
Sri Venumadhav by Hon'ble  
Chief Minister  
Sri J.Vengala Rao and  
Hon'ble Minister for  
Education,  
Sri M.V. Krishna Rao during  
the first world Telugu  
Conference at Hyderabad

Sri Venumadhav, Member, A.P.  
Sangeeta Nataka Akademi  
with Sri K.V. Gopalaswami,  
Chairman.



Sri Venumadhav, Sri P.Pullaiiah,  
Sri Raja Ramdass, (Managing  
Director), Sri Manick Rao  
(Minister, Chairman),  
Sri Shyam Bengal,  
Sri L.V. Prasad, Smt. Jamuna,  
Smt. Rajyamsinha director of  
film development corporation  
of A.P





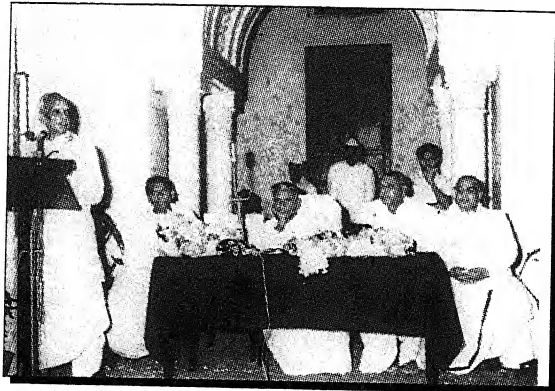
Sri Venumadhav, being felicitated on the occasion of his 50 th birthday, at Warangal with Sri Potturi Venkateshwara Rao, Dr. Mikkilineni, Dr. Gummadi, Sri Dhoolipala and others.



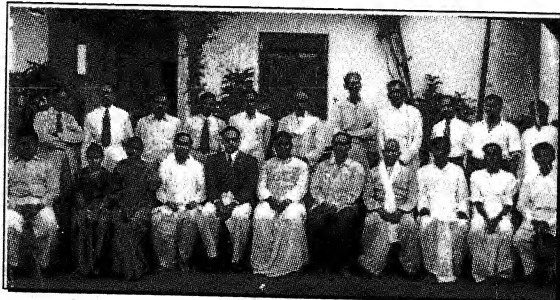
Felicitations to Sri Venumadhav, on the occasion of Shasthi poorthi (60th birthday). Mrs. & Mr. Venumadhav can be seen with Dr. Gummadi, Sri BPR Vittal, Justice Bhaskara Rao, Sri K. Rosaiah, Dr. C. Narayana Reddy, Dr. Akkineni Nageshwar Rao, Sri M.S. Reddy, Prof. I.V. Chalapathi Rao, Sri Rayapathi Sambasiva Rao and Sri B.V. Pattabhiram, at Ravindra Bharathi.



Sri Venumadhav's silver jubilee function at Madras, organised by Kalavahini on the dias are Sarvasri Rajababu, Padmanabham, Dr. Gummadi, Mikkilineni, V. Nagaiah, Vidwan Viswam (President) & B.N. Reddy.



Sri Venumadhav, being felicitated on the occasion of 30 years of dedicated life to the art of Mimicry by legislators of A.P. at Legislative council. Dr. M. Chenna Reddy, Chief Minister, can also be seen



Sri Venumadhav with Sri Kapila Kasipathi Dr. M. Chenna Reddy, Sri Rayaprolu Subba Rao, Prof. Diwakarla Venkata Avadhani, Sri Sannidhanam Suryanarayana Shastri, on the occasion of Vijaya Kala Samithi Annual Day Celebrations at Hyderabad.



Sri Venumadhav, being felicitated on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee year of Mimicry Performance, by "Kalaradhana" at Ravindra Bharathi, Hyderabad. Sri P.V. Ranga Rao, Sri Gummadi, Dr. C. Narayana Reddy, Sri E. Madhava Reddy Home Minister, Sri Ch. Vidhya Sagar rao, MP, can also be seen.



Sri Venumadhav, on the occasion of receiving Rajyalakshmi Award at Madras. Sri I.J. Rao Dr. C. Narayana Reddy K. Jaggaiah, Dr. M. Bala Muralikrishna, Dr. Shantappa, Sri Gummadi and Sri Vempati Chinna Satyam can also be seen.



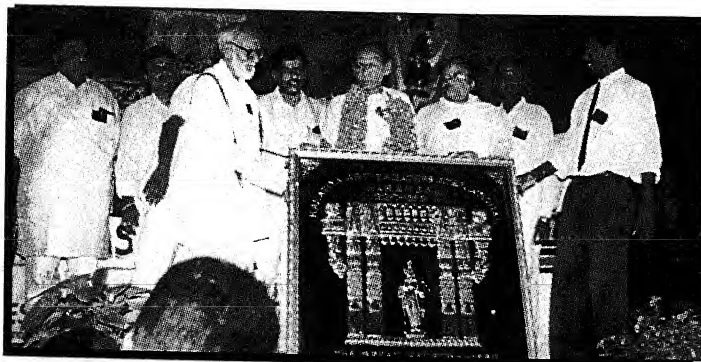
Sri Venumadhav, being presented with Telugu Atma Gowrawam Award by Sri N. Chandra Babu Naidu, Chief Minister. Dr. C. Narayana Reddy and Sri T. Seetharam, Minister, can also be seen.



Sri Venumadhav at Hyderabad being felicitated on the occasion of A.P. State Mimicry Festival at Hyderabad. Dr. C. Narayana Reddy, Sri Gummadi, Mimicry Srinivas, Sri Akkineni Nageshwar Rao and Sri T.L. Kantha Rao can also be seen.



Sri Venumadhav being Welcomed in a traditional manner at Kurnool.



Sri Venumadhav, being presented with the Great Maestro Award by Kakatiya Theaters International, Warangal. Sri S.P. Bala Subrahmanyam Sri Kaloji, and Dr. C. Narayana Reddy can also be seen.



Sri Venumadhav Director on the occasion of 40 days Workshop on Mimicry at Telugu University. Prof. I.V.Chalapathi Rao, Prof. T. Donappa, Prof. B.V. Pattabhiram can also be seen.

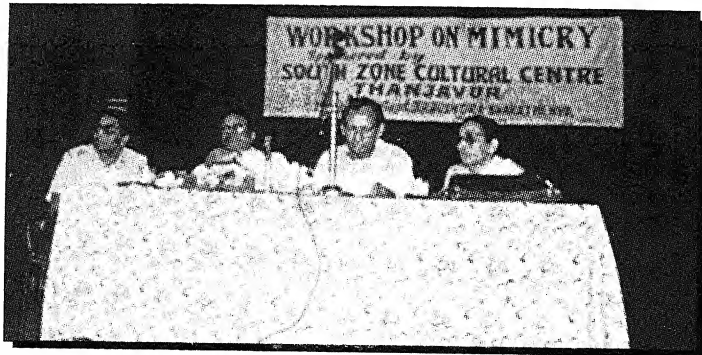


Sri Venumadhav director on the occasion of Mimicry Workshop conducted by Ministry of Human Resources, at Kakatiya University, in collaboration with Prekshaka Sabha, Warangal.





Sri Venumadhav Member of Senate, Kakatiya University, Warangal.



Sri Venumadhav ,on the occasion of Mimicry Workshop Conducted under the auspices of South Zone Cultural Centre, Thanjaavur, at Hyderabad (Ravindra Bharathi) Mr. Kishan Rao Dr. C. Narayana Reddy and Prof. N. Krishnakumari are also seen.

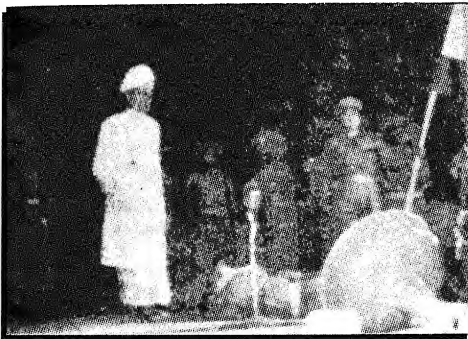


Sri Venumadhav (Director) Forty Days Workshop on Mimicry at P.S. Telugu University. Sri T. Krishna, Smt. Nayani Krishna Kumari, Vice Chancellor of P.S. Telugu University, Prof. V. Ramakistayya, Vice Chancellor, Osmania University, Mimicry Srinivas, Sri Harikishan, Sri G.V.N. Raju, Sri Chittori Gopi Chand, can also be seen.

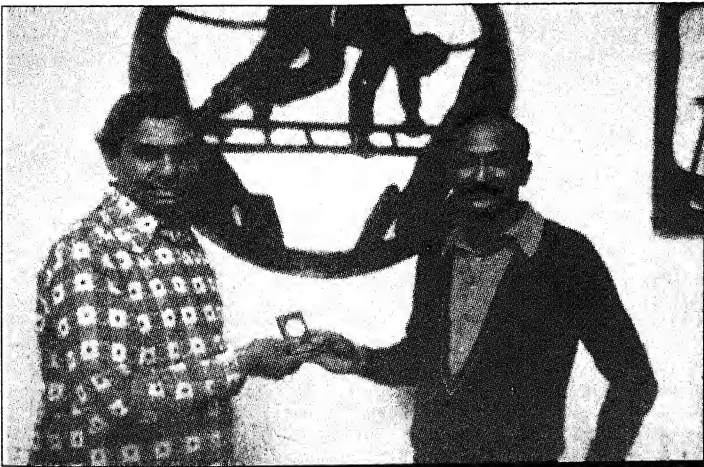


### JOSHIMATH

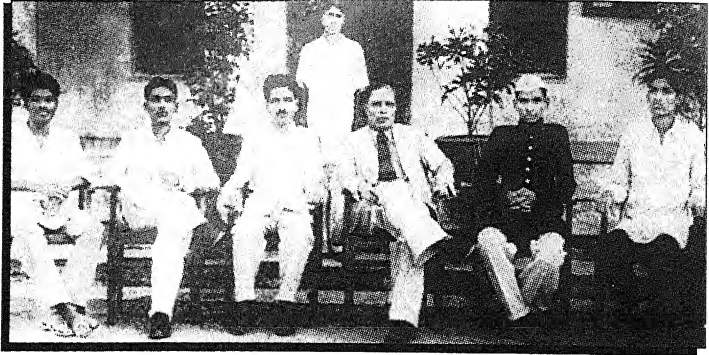
Sri Venumadhav entertaining our beloved jawans at Kumaon Hills



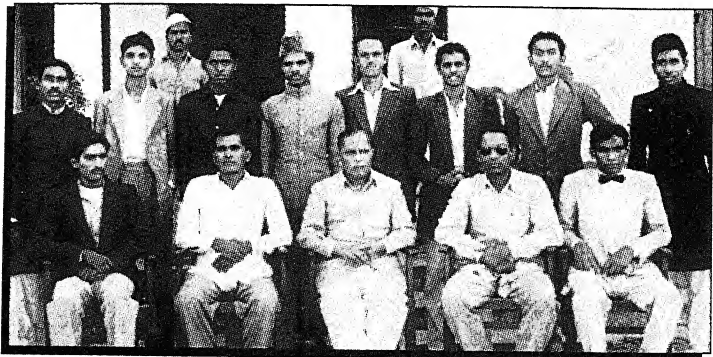
Sri Venumadav as  
Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Sri N.T.  
Rama Rao (cine artiste) as  
Jawan and Sri  
Satyanarayana (cine  
artiste) as General  
Chowdary on the stage, in  
aid of National Defence  
Fund at Nizam College  
grounds, Hyderabad



Principal Choudhury presenting a VIP memento to  
Sri Venumadhav, at Darjeeling, Himalayan  
Mountaineering Institute.



Sri Venumadhav (in black sherwani),  
as Cultural Group Secretary, Students' Union,  
Arts & Science College, Warangal -1952. Prof. B.V. Ramnarsu,  
Principal can also be seen.



Sri Venumadhav, (with bow), as General Captain,  
Sports & Games, Arts & Science College, Warangal -1953.



Sri Venumadhav with  
Dr. C. Narayana Reddy and  
Dr. Dasarathi 1955.

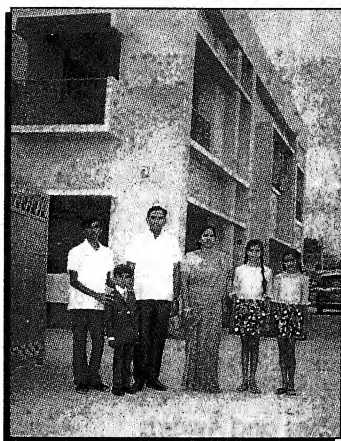




Sri Venumadhav with family



Smt. Sobha Venumadhav and Sri Venumadhav at Universal Studio, U.S.A.



Sri Venumadhav and his Family.



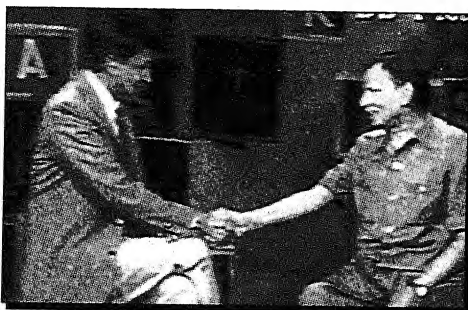
Some of the many Trophies and Awards

Sri Venumadhav, being interviewed by "Surabhi" for TV Programme.



Sri Venumadhav, picking the Winner for "Surabhi" Programme.

Sri Venumadhav being interviewed by Sri Deepak Vohra, for "Breakfast show" of Delhi TV.





More Trophies, Awards and Sanmana Pathrams.

## VENUMADHAV AT A GLANCE

- I. Name : Dr. Nerella Venumadhav
- II. Date of Birth : 28-12-1932
- III. Place of Birth : Warangal - 506 012.  
Andhra Pradesh, India.
- IV. Present & Permanent Address : "KALAPRAPOORNA"  
Dr. Nerella Venumadhav,  
Ex-MLC,  
Mimicry Artiste, Vasavi Colony,  
Warangal-506 002.A. P., INDIA.
- V. Academic Qualifications : B.A., B.Com., B.Ed.,

### VI. POSITIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES HELD :

- 1) MLC, Nominated by the Govt. of Andhra Pradesh, 1972-1978.
- 2) Director, Film Development Corporation, A.P., 1976-1977.
- 3) Secretary, Film Festival, World - Telugu Conference, Hyderabad 1975.
- 4) Member, Sangeetha Nataka Academy, Govt. of A.P., 1974-1978.
- 5) Member, Senate, Kakateeya University, Warangal, A.P., 1976 to 1978.
- 6) Member, South Zone Cultural Centre (Thanjavur), Govt. of India. (Presently Holding).
- 7) Member, Programme Advisory Committee, Doordarshan, Hyderabad, 1993-1996.
- 8) Member, Telecom Advisory Committee of A.P., 1993-1996.
- 9) Member, Zonal Railway Users Committee, 1993-1996.
- 10) Member, A.P. Legislative Library Committee, 1972-1975.
- 11) Member, Ravindrabharathi Committee, 1974-1978.
- 12) Member, Academies Review Committee, Govt. of A.P., 1975.
- 13) Honorary Rotarian, Rotary Club of Warangal, A.P. 1973-1975

## II. BIOGRAPHIES AND SOUVENIRS

- 1) **"Mimicry and World Renowned Venumadhav"** (English)  
by Prof. I.V. Chalapathi Rao  
Retired Director of Higher Education; Editor 'TRIVENI'  
Andhra Pradesh - 1978.
- 2) **"Viswa Vikhyatha Mimicry Samrat Nerella Venumadhav Jeevitha Katha"** (Telugu)  
by Dr. Puranam Subrahmanya Sarma,  
Editor, Andhra Jyothi Weekly - 1987.
- 3) Souvenir on the life and work of **Dr. Nerella Venumadhav**,  
Published on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee Celebrations  
of Artiste's Career at Madras, Abbotsbury - 1973.
- 4) Souvenir on the life and work of **Dr. Nerella Venumadhav**  
published on the occasion of his Shashtipoorthi celebrations,  
Ravindrabharathi, Hyderabad - 1992.

## VIII. BOOKS DEDICATED BY RENOWNED AUTHORS :

- 1) **"Sivarpanam"** by 'Kavisamrat' **"Padmabhushan"**,  
Reciepiant of Jnanapeeth Award and Poet Laureate of A.P.  
**Dr. Viswanatha Sathyanarayana** - 1975.
- 2) **"Narayana Reddy Natikalu"** by **Dr. C. Narayan Reddy**,  
**"Padmabhushan"**, Reciepiant of Jnanapeeth Award and MP,  
1977.
- 3) **"Jathi Ratnalu"** by **"Jaduratna"** Prof. **B.V. Pattabhiram**,  
Famous magician, Hypnotist and writer, Hyderabad - 1985.
- 4) **"Devathalethhina Padaga"** a Telugu Play by  
**Dr. P.V. Ramana**, Writer, Research Scholar and Literary  
Critic - 1974.
- 5) **"Raktha Sambandhalu"** (A Telugu Play) by  
**Kodali Gopalaraao**, A Noted Writer - 1956.
- 6) Biographical Video Cassette by ETC **"Sopanalulu"**,  
Hyderabad - 1996.
- 7) Biographical Video Cassette by **Gemini T.V.**  
Hyderabad - 1997.
- 8) Biographical Video by **Doordarshan**, Hyderabad - 1995.
- 9) **'Surabhi'** National (Delhi) - 1994.
- 10) Breakfast show **'National'** Delhi - Interview Cassette by  
**Deepak Vohra** - 1995.

**IX. PRESS CLIPPINGS, ESSAYS ON LIFE & WORK OF THE ARTISTE :**

- 1) The Statesman - 1972.
- 2) The Times of India - 1973, 1992.
- 3) The Hindu - 1988.
- 4) Gulf News - 1989.
- 5) The Khaleej Times - 1989.
- 6) The American Reporter - 1972 - in 10 Languages.
- 7) Sunday Mid-day - 1993.
- 8) Milap - 1973, Hyderabad.
- 9) Shama - 1972 - Urdu - Delhi.
- 10) Andhra Patrika - 1966.
- 11) Andhra Jyothi - 1981, 1990, 1992.
- 12) Andhra Prabha - 1973, 1987, 1992.
- 13) Eenadu - 1989.
- 14) Andhra Bhoomi - 1980.
- 15) Cine Janatha - 1971.
- 16) Udayam - 1985, 1989, 1991.

**X. MAJOR PERFORMANCES ABROAD :**

- 1) Australia and Fiji Islands - 1965.
- 2) Singapore and Malaysia - 1968.
- 3) West Germany, U.K., France, U.S.A. (Many Important Cities Including Hollywood), Canada, Lebanon - 1971.
- 4) U.N.O. (New York)  
Dag Hammar KS Jold Auditorium at the invitation of the U.N.O. - 1971.
- 5) Singapore and Malaysia - 1975.
- 6) U.S.A. and Canada - 1976.
- 7) South Africa, Maritius, Seycheles - 1976.
- 8) Singapore and Malaysia - 1977.
- 9) U.S.A. and Canada - 1982.
- 10) U.A.E. - 1987.
- 11) Maritius - 1990.
- 12) Bherin-1999.



OR PERFORMANCES AT HOME BY SPECIAL INVITATION :

In the august presence of Sir S. Radhakrishnan, Formerly President of India at Madras - 1964.

In the august presence of H.E.H. Sri V.V. Giri, President of India, 1972 - Rashtrapathi Bhavan, New Delhi.

In the august presence of H.E.H. Sri. Gyani Zail Singh, President of India, New Delhi.

In the presence of H.E.H. Sri Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, President of India, Sri J. Vengal Rao, Hon'ble Chief Minister of A.P. - 1975.

In the august presence of Sri B.D. Jatti, Vice-president of India, New Delhi - 1973.

In the august presence of Sri Lal Bahadur Shastri, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India at Hyderabad - 1964.

In the august presence of 'Bharata Ratna' Smt. Indira Gandhi, at New Delhi - 1977.

In the august Presence of Sri Krishna Menon, Defence Minister of India, at Madras - 1958.

In the presence of Sri Neelam Sanjeeva Reddy, Hon'ble Chief Minister of A.P. - 1958.

In the presence of Sri N. Sanjeevaiah, Hon'ble Chief Minister of A.P. - 1962.

In the presence of Sri K. Brahmananda Reddy, Hon'ble Chief Minister of A.P. - 1964.

In the presence of Sri P.V. Narsimha Rao, Hon'ble Chief Minister of A.P. - 1972.

In the presence of Sri T. Anjaiah, Hon'ble Chief Minister of A.P. - 1983.

In the presence of Sri N.T. Rama Rao, Hon'ble Chief Minister of A.P. - 1985.

In the presence of Sri N. Chandra Babu Naidu, Hon'ble Chief Minister of A.P. - 1998.

In the presence of Sri Namboodripad, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Kerala at Trivendrum - 1958.

In the presence of Sri Boorgula Ramakrishna Rao, H.E.H. Governor of Kerala, Trivendrum - 1958.

At Rajbhavan, Madras, in the presence of H.E.H. Sri Bishnuram Mehthi, Governor, and Sri Kamaraj Nadar, Hon'ble Chief Minister, Madras - 1958.

At Raj Bhavan, Bhopal in the presence of H.E.H. Sri.H.V. Pataskar, The Governor - 1963.



- 20) At Rajbhavan, Hyderabad, in the presence of H.E.H Smt. Sharda Mukherjee, Governor - 1977.
- 21) At JNTUC, Hyderabad, in the presence of H.E.H Smt. Kumudben Joshi, Governor - 1987
- 22) At Rajbhavan, Hyderabad, in the presence of H.E.H. Sri Krishnakanth, Governor - 1991.
- 23) At Nephrology Conference, Hyderabad in the presence of H.E.H. Sri Rangarajan, Governor - 1997.
- 24) Performances at some of the important institutions :
  - 1) Punjab University, Chandigarh.
  - 2) Andhra University, Waltair.
  - 3) Osmania University, Hyderabad.
  - 4) J.N.T.U. Hyderabad.
  - 5) Kakatiya University, Warangal.
  - 6) P.S. Telugu University, Hyderabad.
  - 7) Krishnadevaraya University, Ananthapur.
  - 8) Bombay University.
  - 9) A.I.R. - New Delhi, Bhopal, Baroda, Trivendrum, Bombay, Hyderabad, Gowhati etc.,
  - 10) Lions Club - Hoshiapur, Punjab.
  - 11) World Telugu Conference at Hyderabad, Mauritius, Kaulalampur and Bangalore.
  - 12) Military School at Baroda.
  - 13) I.I.T. Kharagpur.
  - 14) I.I.T. Bangalore.
  - 15) I.I.T. Kanpur.
  - 16) Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, Darjeeling.
  - 17) Joshimut for Jawans at Kumoan Hills.
  - 18) Goorkha Regiment, Almorah, for wounded soldiers at Military Hospital, Jorhat and Secunderabad.
  - 19) Defence Accounts Dept. Calcutta.  
Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad.

## **XII. DEGREES AND TITLES CONFERRED :**

- 1) Honorary Doctorate Degree by J.N.T.U. Hyderabad - 1987.
- 2) Honorary Doctorate Degree or 'Kalaprapoorna' Andhra University, Visakhapatnam - 1977.
- 3) Honorary Doctorate by Kakatiya University, Warangal - 1992.

## MIMICRY

### TITLES :

- 1) 'Dhwanyanukarana samrat'
- 2) 'Mimicry Samrat'
- 3) 'Chupe Rustum'
- 4) 'Nominated amongst' 'Angels'
- 5) 'Dhwanyanukarana Chakravarthi'
- 6) 'Kalasaraswathi'
- 7) 'Swar ke Raja'
- 8) 'Dhwanyanukarana Praveena'
- 9) 'Dhwanyanukarana Nidhi'
- 10) 'Mimicry Ratna'

### XIII. AWARDS AND FELICITATIONS :

- 1) Rajalaxmi Foundation Award, Madras - 1982.
- 2) T. Subbiram Reddy Lifetime Achievement Award - 1997.
- 3) Govt. of A.P. Atmagowrava Lifetime Achievement Award, Hyderabad - 1998.
- 4) 'Kalaradhana' Lifetime Achievement Award, Hyderabad - 1998.
- 5) Civic Reception at Warangal and Presentation of "Swarna Kankanam" by Sri Neelam Sanjeeva Reddy, Hon'ble C.M. - 1958.
- 6) Civic Reception at Anantapur - 1959.
- 7) 'Kanakabhishekam' at Proddatur - 1997.
- 8) Golden Showers at Bhimavaram - 1996.
- 9) Golden Bracelet presentation at Mimicry Seminar at Hyderabad - 1996.
- 10) Silver Jubilee (Artistic Career) celebrated by 'Kalavahini' Madras, Abbotsbury - 1973.
- 11) Felicitation at Warangal by Vamsee Arts International on the occasion of the Artiste's 50th Birth Day -1982.
- 12) Felicitation by Andhra Associations at Jamshedpur, Delhi, Nagpur, Bhilai, Madras, Calcutta etc.
- 13) Poornakumbham Felicitation at Kurnool by Raghava Kalasamithi - 1975.
- 14) Felicitation by A.P. Legislators on completion of three decades of Artistic Career - 1977.

- 15) Shasti Poorthi Celebrations by Desciples, Several Artistes and Cultural Associations at Ravindrabharathi, Hyderabad - 1992.
  - 16) Felicitation by 'Kalaradhana' on the occasion of completion of 50 years of artiste's career at Ravindra Bharathi, Hyderabad - 1998.
- And several others both at home land and abroad.

**XIV. Organisational responsibilities :**

- 1) Director, Seminar-cum-Workshop on Mimicry sponsored by Human Resources Development, Govt. of India, held at Kakatiya University, organised by A.P. Nataka Academy and Prekshaka Sabha - 1993.
- 2) 40 days' workshop on Mimicry at Hyderabad, sponsored by Sri Potti Sriramulu Telugu University -1986.
- 3) Director, Seminar of 'Mimicry', sponsored by South Zone Cultural Centre, Thanjavur, at Ravindrabharathi, Hyderabad - 1997.
- 4) 40 days Work Shop on Mimicry at Hyderabad, sponsored by Sri Potti Sriramulu Telugu University, Hyderabad - 1997.
- 5) Acted as Resource Person, Judge and Chairman of several selection committees.

**XV. Contribution to Social Welfare Activities :**

- 1) Andhra Cyclone Relief Fund Benefit Shows throughout Andhra Pradesh - Twice.
- 2) National Defence Fund, throughout Andhra Pradesh - 1964.
- 3) Guiding Seminars emphasising social awareness in art performances.
- 4) Benefit Performances in aid of several cultural, literary organisations, all the world over.

**Address for correspondence :**

**Dr. NERELLA VENUMADHAV**

Vasavi Colony, Warangal - 506 002. A.P.

Phone : 08712 - 61388



**Sri Venumadhav**

Don't give Dr. Venumadhav more than a second of your time. If you do, you will see your self mimicking him.

- Gulf News, 13th Jan'1989.